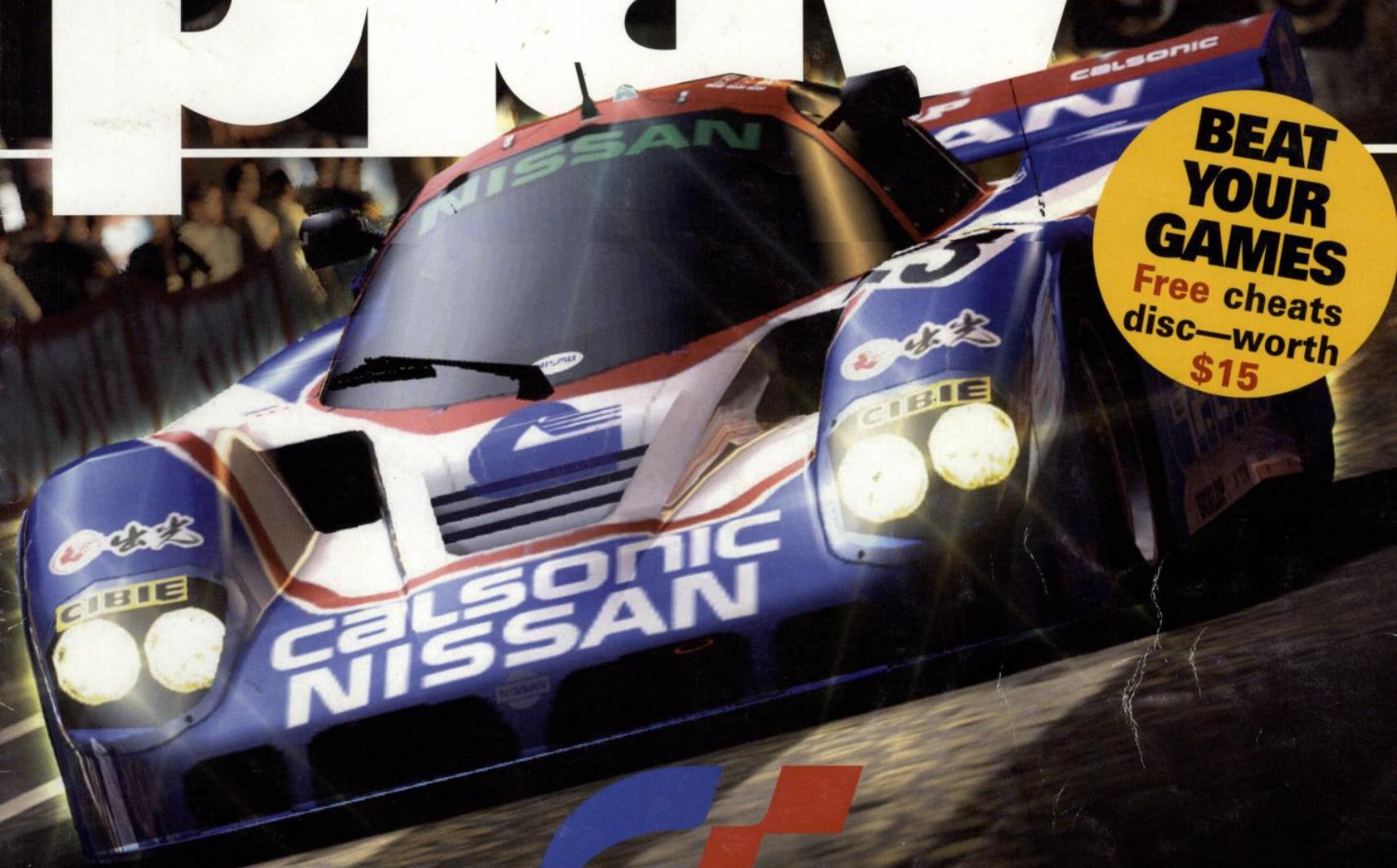


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GT

WORLD EXCLUSIVE

GRAN TURISMO® 4

THE REAL DRIVING SIMULATOR

Hands on with the game, interview with the creator – get the inside line on the PS2's greatest racer

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- » DEMON STONE » SILENT HILL 4 » OBSCURE » V8 SUPERCARS 2 » VIEWTIFUL JOE » KILLZONE
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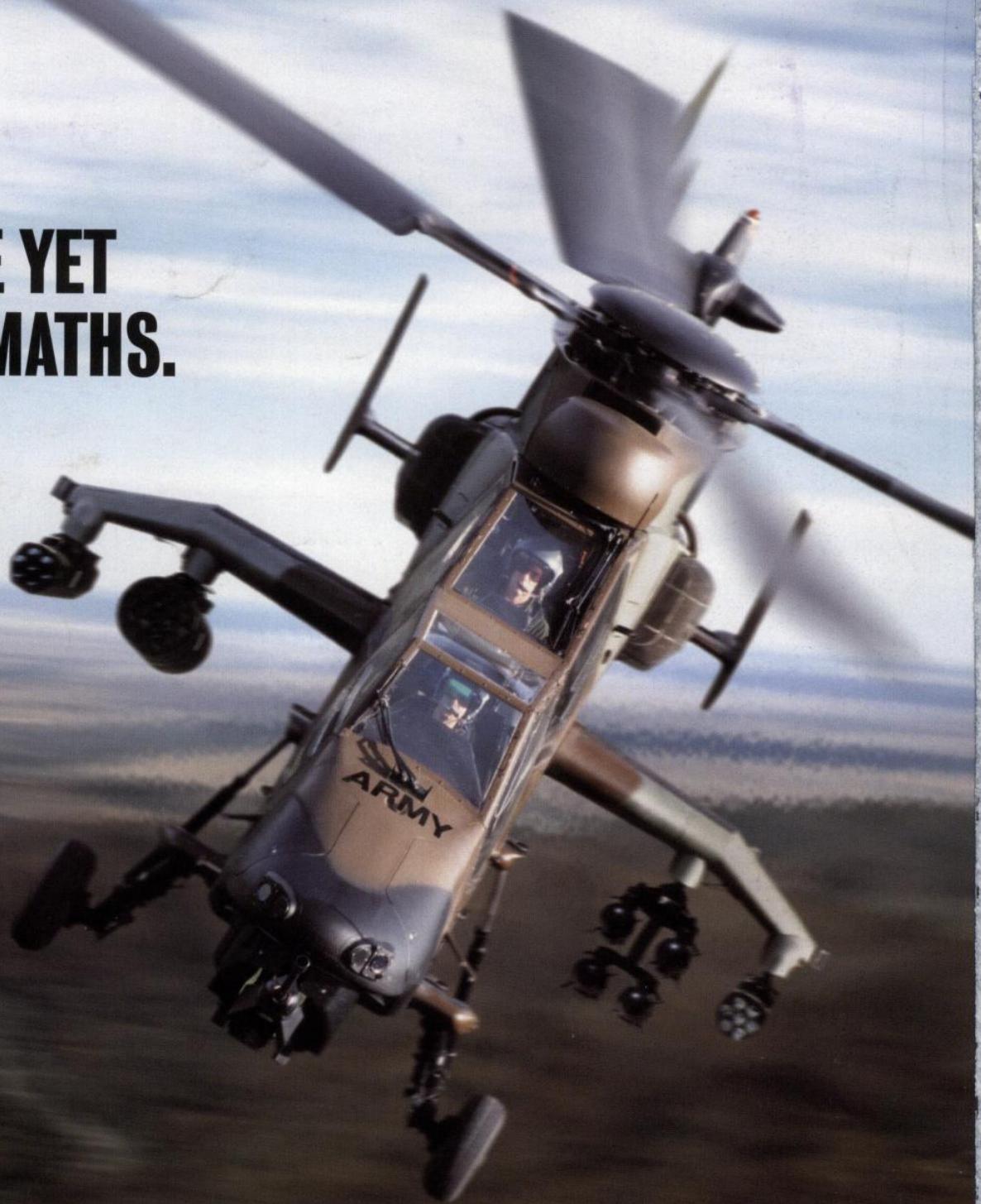
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Cover image

Gran Turismo 4

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GRAPHICS - WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL, EH?

Games are all about the mythical beast that is gameplay, right? Forget pretty. Forget sexy. Forget 'look what my PS2 can do!', it's all about what a game is like to play.

Rubbish.

The way that a game looks is as important as the way it plays – it's part of the experience and therefore what we term 'game' (it's also a much more interesting medium than that label implies, but that's another editorial). Anyway, the important thing to remember about visuals is that they should be considered 'good' if they are appropriate for the game they are used to depict.

Burnout 3 couldn't work if it didn't move as quickly or have (believably) deformable cars, therefore the graphics facilitate the gameplay by working hand in hand with it. The result is a 'good game'. Then there's that Mojibribon game we reviewed a few issues back – a game about inking the words spoken by Japanese dude Mojibri. It's 2D and looks like some kind of animated Japanese pen and ink art print. It has great graphics because they complement the gameplay.

Just because a game looks like an approximation of what the real world looks like does not necessarily mean that it has good graphics. This is not a competition to see who can make the most photo-realistic game ever.

Although, if it was, this month's cover game would win hands down. Gran Turismo 4 is without doubt the closest thing we're going to get to photo realism on PS2. The inclusion of the game's Photo mode, where you can pose your car and take professional quality-looking photographs, is no accident. GT has always been part great driving game, part car magazine. Or car porn, if you like. The thrill of being able to drive the world's greatest and fastest cars is all the more heightened because they look so real. If they look real, then that takes you closer to the experience of driving the car because, let's face it, part of our obsession with cars isn't just about handling or fuel economy but about the way they look. Something that Gran Turismo 4 succeeds in doing better than any driving/racing game in history.

So yeah, lap up our exclusive hands-on preview, lap up the exclusive gameplay footage on the disc and bear this in mind – our cover art is an actual in-game screenshot.

Drive safely.

Michael



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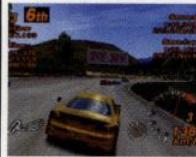
Two arguments for the price of one this time, as we put the case for Pro Evo: better than FIFA for starters, and possibly the greatest PlayStation Game Ever for seconds. Don't agree? Then turn to page 26 and see what passion for a videogame really looks like.



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GRAN TURISMO 2

The Greatest PlayStation Game Ever series is nearing its end but we haven't yet put the case for what is without doubt one of the greatest console racing series of all time. But can we claim that Gran Turismo 2 is the greatest PS2 game ever? Some would say the real question is 'how can we not'?



COVER GAME

To think you probably thought that you'd heard all there is to hear, and read all there was to read...

06 WORLD EXCLUSIVE

GRAN TURISMO 4

CONSIDER THIS A PROLOGUE TO A GAME THAT'S ANYTHING BUT



REVIEWS

The usual helping of a ridiculously large amount of games reviewed with all the wit and intelligence you've come to expect.



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SINGSTAR PARTY

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LOTR: THE THIRD AGE

EYETOY: PLAY 2

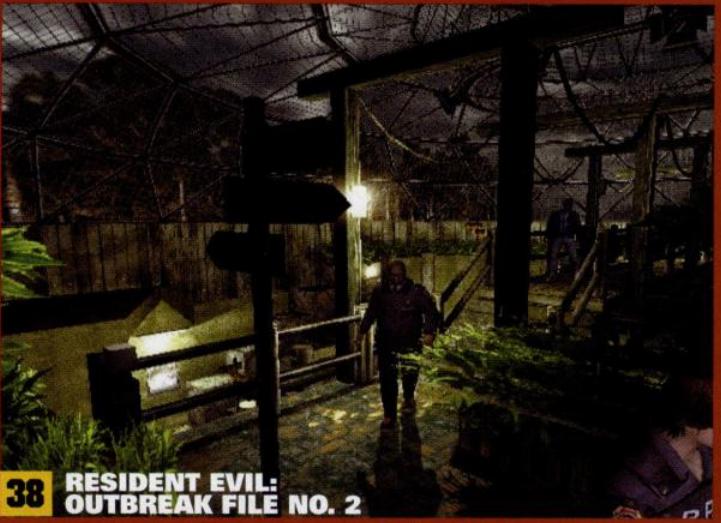
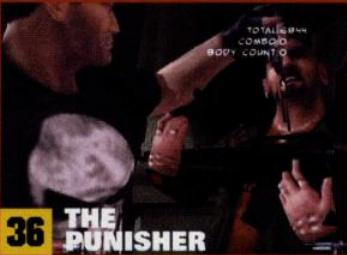
THE GETAWAY: BLACK MONDAY

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Letting you know just how sleek it is.



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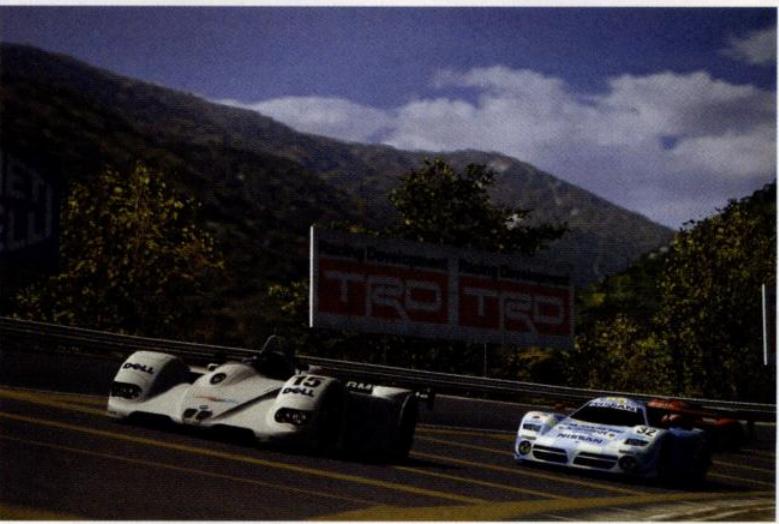
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Because why not.



GRAN TURISMO 4

"I WANT TO DRIVE MY OWN CAR ON MY TELEVISION"
KAZUNORI YAMAUCHI



FORGET THE CONQUERING OF MOUNT graphically impossible, after all, it's an obstacle that's routinely cleared upon the move from one generation of videogame hardware to the next. Look at the original *Gran Turismo* and its PSone sequel for example – astonishing at the time – beaten into a cocked hat by *Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec*. *GT 4* may well be picture postcard lovely in places with its depiction of all manner of picturesque locations bathed in

sunlight or basking in the hazy neon glow of a night-time metropolis, and whilst it may also happen to display automobiles that look shiny and solid enough to cause vehicular manslaughter if they ever managed to escape the confines of the TV, *Gran Turismo 4* represents more than just a graphical improvement over past iterations.

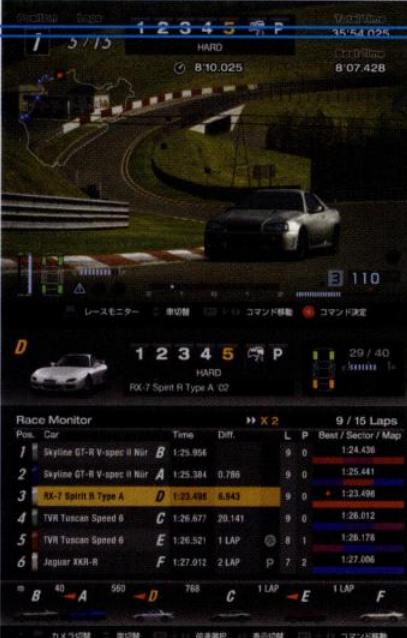
Forget the number of cars, circuits, license tests and ability to tweak your vehicle – *Gran Turismo*'s revolutionary focus on the minutiae of automobile set-up, which for nearly a decade sounded the death knell for the 'arcade style racer', is after all, a no-brainer when it's sequel time.

GT 4 is all about one thing – the mythical winged beast that is gameplay. The new

GT 4 isn't just *GT Prologue* writ large; it has been further tweaked and refined in the all-important car handling

frontier that is online play is going to have to wait, what with Sony announcing that *GT* won't be going online until the release of an online-centric version of the game sometime in 2005. However **play™** has been granted a short excursion on the back of our favourite winged beast and can report that *GT 4* isn't just *GT Prologue* writ large; it has been further tweaked and refined – not so much graphically, if at all in fact – but in the all-important car handling.

In the pursuit of increasing realism Polyphony Digital has obviously been inspired by Konami's *Enthusia Racing*, as now prevalent on the somewhat congested HUD nestling just beneath the speedometer, rev counter and gear display is a new G-

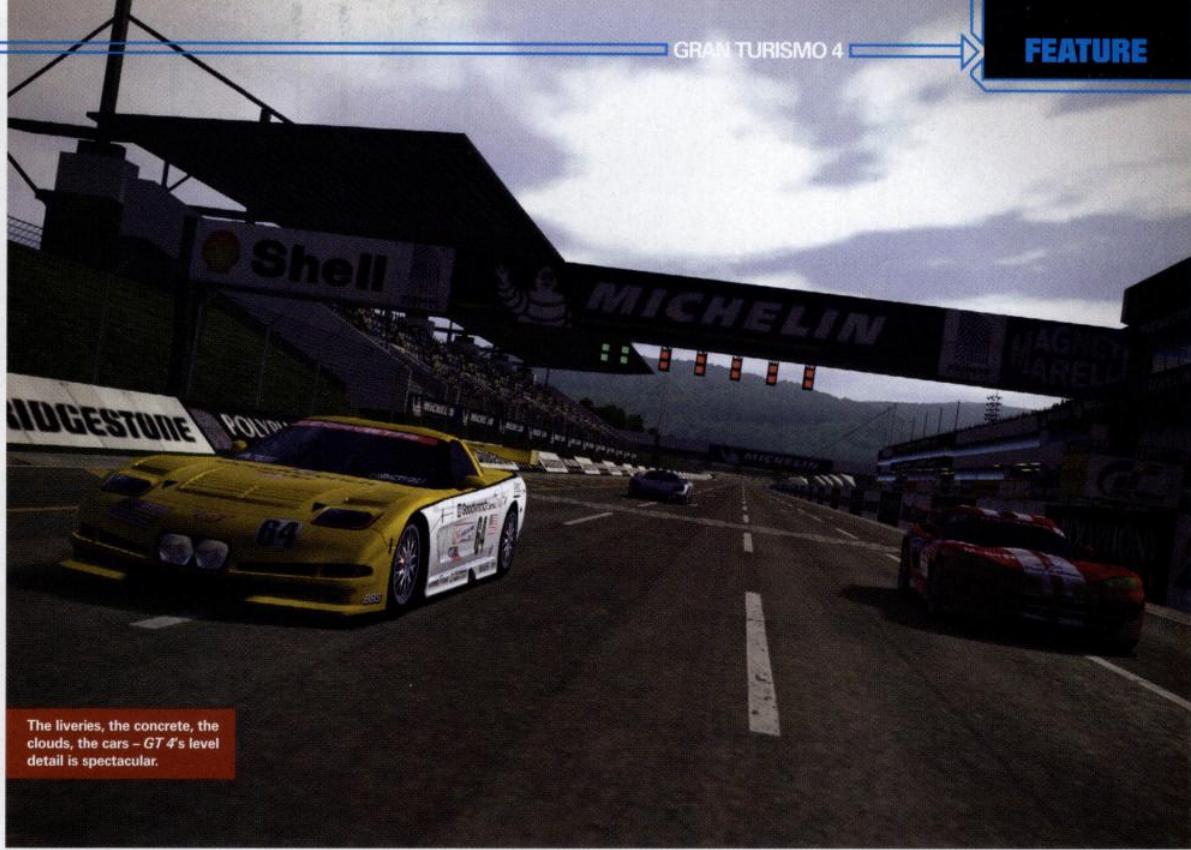


BESPECTACLED

On top of the usual racing modes and the photo options, a new option called B-Spec is available. This can be used within any of the racing modes within the game and sees the player acting almost like a rally style co-driver or race team manager, observing a race from a number of view points – the replay view, an in-car view and a 'race monitor' screen, and providing instructions to an AI driver as to how it should be driven, as opposed to actually driving yourself. The race monitor includes lap times, sector times and pit information meaning that there should be depth to form the kind of sly pit strategies that Formula One teams seem to be constantly hatching.

Instructions given to the AI driver range from dictating how aggressively he should drive, on a scale of 1-5, when to overtake and how many risks he should take. In B-Spec mode special consideration must be made to the set up of the car including tyre selection and amount of fuel on board. Naturally therefore, pit stops must be timed to coincide with tyre degradation as well as simply ensuring that the car doesn't run out of fuel.

While B-Spec doesn't sound like the kind of game mode many would have had on their wish lists for *GT 4*, it has the potential to be an interesting diversion.



Force gauge. It's time to get realistic. In order to understand G-Forces and their impact on *GT 4* we have to understand Newton's second law of motion Holmes, which says that the force acting on an object is equal to its mass multiplied by its acceleration. Or $F = ma$. Now that's as complicated as this needs to get otherwise our understanding of advanced physics will be exposed for the sham that it is. What isn't a sham is the effect Polyphony Digital's working of the principles of G-Force into *GT 4* has accomplished – you can feel the conflicting forces at work on your vehicle with every adjustment of the steering wheel.

Entering a corner at speed and trying to wrench your car round is an obvious recipe for disaster in pretty much every racing game conceived. *GT 4* is no different, but it's the totally convincing manner in which this happens that's unique here – the G-Force gauge at the bottom of the screen maxing out in the relevant direction as your car careens off the track. With time we surmise

An accurate and exhilarating cornering sensation would be for nothing if *GT 4* didn't feature a selection of fabulous curves to cruise. It does

that gauge will give us deeper understanding of the performance of each car round every curve for the ultimate in mastery.

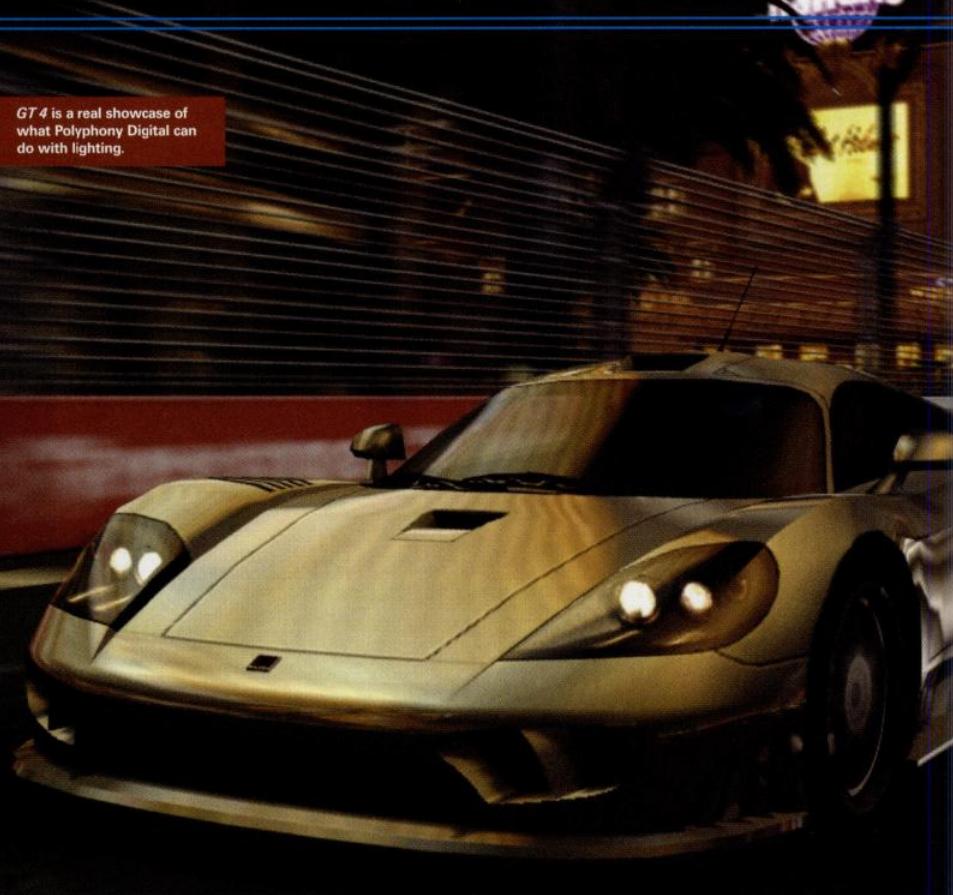
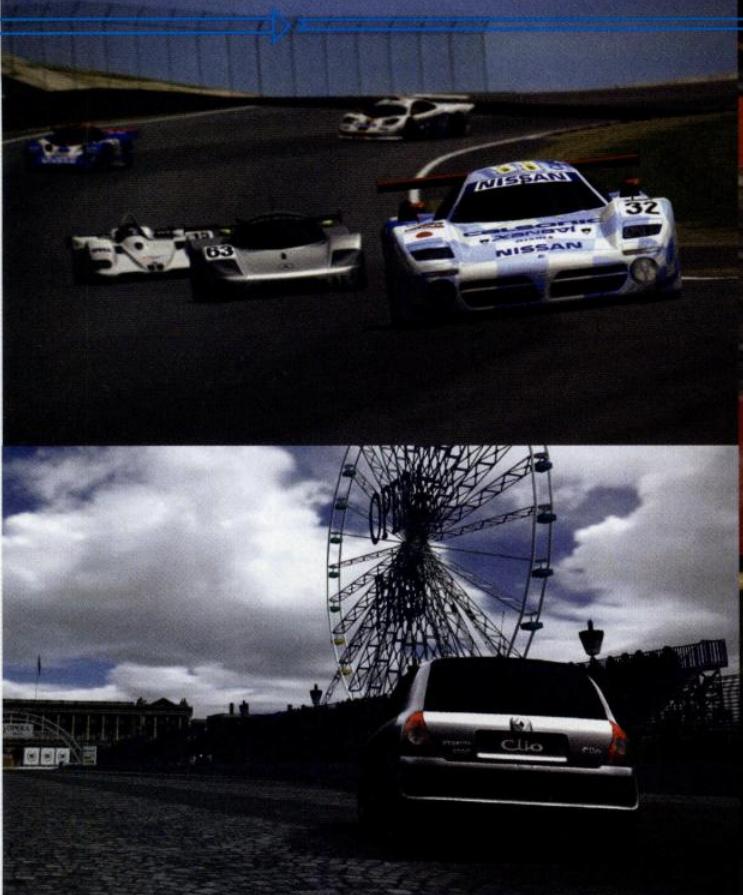
That's the sciencey bit out of the way. Of course, an accurate and exhilarating cornering sensation would be for nothing if *GT 4* didn't feature a selection of fabulous curves to cruise. It does. And if the selection of courses we've sampled are anything to go by, *GT 4* will be an automotive version of 'Wish You Were Here'. From scenic and sun-drenched, to city-based and moodily lit – a number of real-life locations have been recreated for your racing pleasure. The familiar green and grey of identikit racing circuits is also present and correct.

The build of *GT 4* we played featured nine tracks – New York, Nurburgring (Nordschleife), George V (Paris), Hong Kong, Tsukuba, Fisco (Fuji Speedway), Grand Canyon, Amalfi (Costa di Amalfi) and Citta di Aria. We raced the hell out of all of them.

New York was the location for our first run at the wheel of an Audi TT Abt Touring Car '02, with the rest of the pack consisting of a WOODONE Toms Supra (JBTC) '03, Astra Touring Car '00, Xanari NISMO GT-R (JGTC) '03, TAKATA DOME NSX (JGTC) '03 and Castral Toms Supra (JGTC) '01. Many of you will be familiar with this course – it does, after all, feature in *GT Prologue*. The beautiful car models coming as a reminder of just what Polyphony Digital can wring from the PS2 with their super crisp liveries. We're slowly easing into the flow of things, becoming accustomed with the Audi's handling when we're shunted up the arse by the Castral Toms Supra – a rude reminder that AI has never been one of *Gran Turismo*'s strong points.

Next Nurburgring. The car – a BMW Concept M5 '04 for a distinctly Germanic theme and it pains us to admit it, but our performance suggests that driving is a foreign concept. The squeal of distressed tyres is a





We do manage to notice the G-Force meter take effect and work out its potential impact on our ailing cornering

» constant reminder of our pitiful driving. Still, we do manage to notice the G-Force meter take effect and work out its potential impact on our ailing cornering, not to mention the pronounced undulation of the course in places.

To France and more specifically, L'Arc de Triomphe for the George V, looking resplendent and beautifully lit. As for the course, it's a tight and twisty little number – asphalt never looked so slick. Our vehicle of choice, a Renault 5 Maxi Turbo Rally Car '85 – a screaming tyke of a car. Swinging anticlockwise round L'Arc puts the G meter at its limits. This Paris solo-run is a hottie,

the Maxi's dump valve going nuts, our only disappointment the fact that we can't match wits with competing cars.

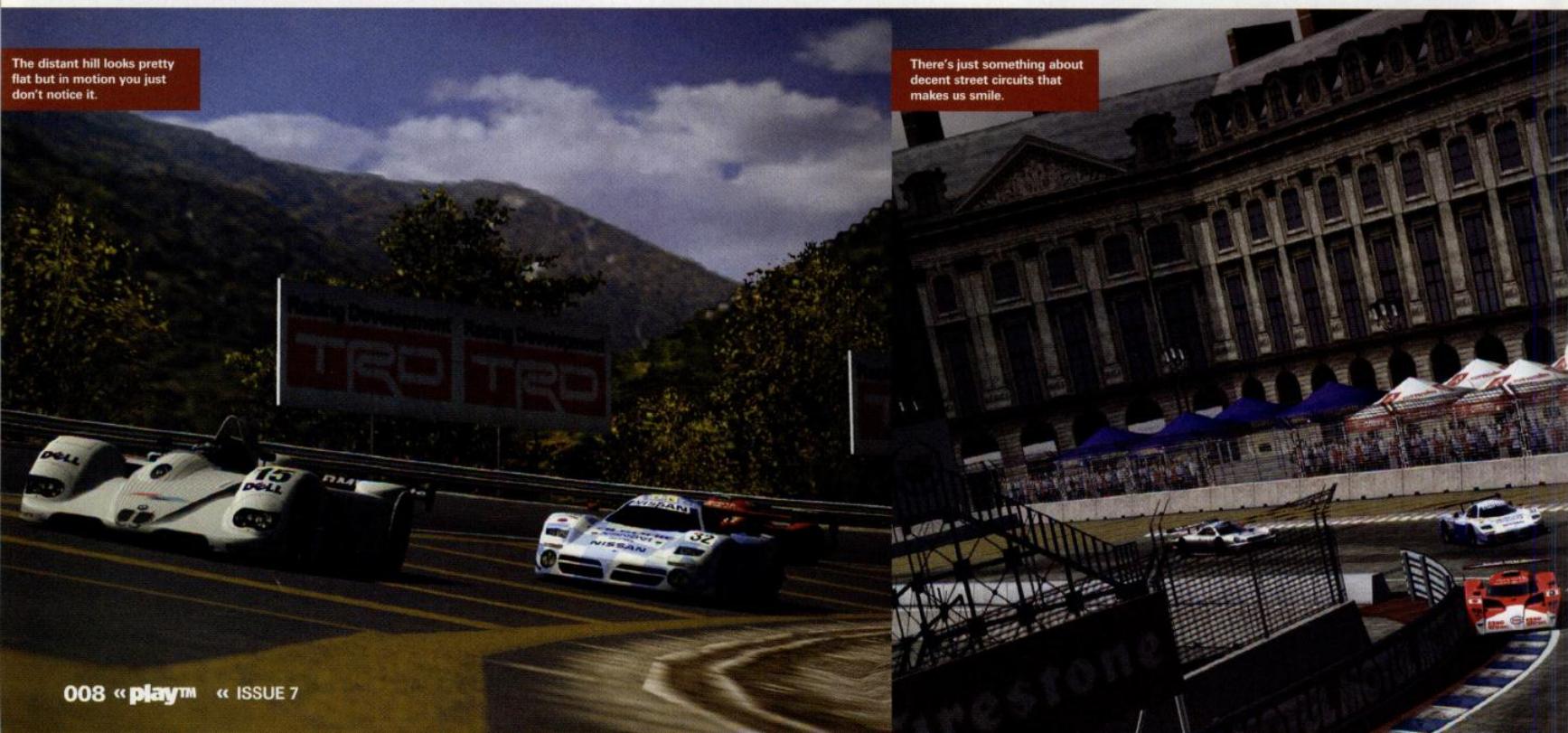
It's not so much 'round the world in eighty days' as 'round the world in 80bhp' as we travel from France to Hong Kong for a little chassis shimmy. Only 80bhp? That's puny! Indeed it is, and in fact it's being generous – for our little pootle round Hong Kong we thought we'd opt for the Daihatsu Copen Active TOP '02 in a tasteful shade of dark green mica, a car than can only muster 63bhp. It's not so much *Metropolis Street Racer* as 'Metropolis Quayside Amble' – the waterfront looking most

tranquil under the polluted haze of the Hong Kong sky. Sadly, one car in the line up didn't understand the remit – the Suzuki Cappuccino '92 streaking into the lead. Elsewhere the rest of the pack display some rather errant path-finding skills – mounting curbs in a haphazard fashion. It's quite worrying considering how long GT 4 has been in development.

From Hong Kong we hop across the Yellow Sea for a bit of circuit racing – Tsukuba and the Fuji Speedway to be precise. Tsukuba, notable for the fact that we went head to head with a Shelby Cobra 427 '67 in our very own Shelby (a truly

The distant hill looks pretty flat but in motion you just don't notice it.

There's just something about decent street circuits that makes us smile.





ONE HOUR PHOTO

Considering the fact we've already been extolling the virtues of GT4's beautiful locations and equally beautiful car models, GT4's Photo mode is a very welcome addition to the staple driving, enabling you to create a super-realistic photo album of cars photographed amidst absolutely exquisite scenery. Five vistas were available as backdrops for our vehicular glamour shoots - Brooklyn, NY emitting a hazy neon glow, Piazza San Marco at dusk, Tsumago with its sun-bleached cobble stone, Sagano with its bamboo thicket and Shibuya with its neon-lit neon lights bathed in a neon glow. With more neon. A further ten locations have also been announced for the game.

PHOTO TRAVEL

ASIAN FISH MARKET

GION DISTRICT, Kyoto, Japan

NANZENJI TEMPLE, Kyoto, Japan

SAGANO, Kyoto, Japan

TSUMAGO, Nagano, Japan

PIAZZA SAN MARCO, Venice, Italy

REALTO BRIDGE, Venice, Italy

SHIBUYA, Tokyo, Japan

TOKYO INTERNATIONAL FORUM, Tokyo, Japan

SHIGA KOGEN, Nagano, Japan

BROOKLYN, New York, USA

TIMES SQUARE, New York, USA

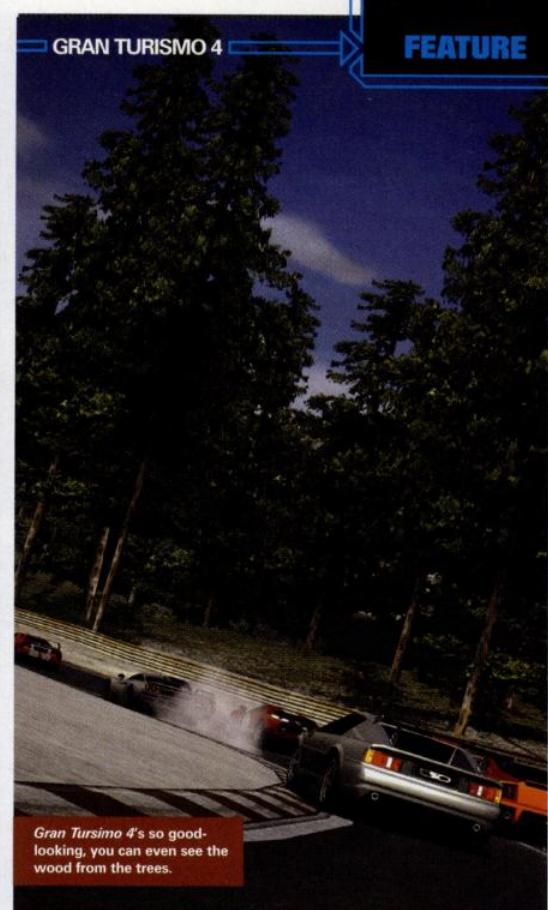
FREEMONT, Las Vegas, USA

LOUISBERG SQUARE, Boston, USA

After selecting a car and background, would-be photographers will find the tools available to create striking images from all manner of extreme angles. Keen photographers will note

that the controls resemble those of an SLR camera with up to a 5x zoom and depth of field from F-1 to F-16 available, as well as the ability to pan/tilt the camera, rotate the viewfinder clockwise or anticlockwise, and alter the camera elevation too.

A second mode, Photo Drive, is also available, this time on every in-game course. After selecting a location, a car is driven automatically through facilitating action shots. A little blur effect here, a sepia tone there and you've got a picture. A 1.2 MegaPixel JPEG to be precise that can be printed on a compatible photo printer via the wonders of USB.



Gran Turismo 4's so good-looking, you can even see the wood from the trees.

gorgeous car) and thrashed it; the Fuji Speedway notable for revealing the awesome way in which Polyphony Digital communicates the sensation of high speeds through subtle use of sound. Taking our Toyota Castrol TOMS Supra (JGTC) '01 past 200kmh the traditional noise of rubber compounds on asphalt subsides, replaced by a sound that can only be described as 'wind rush' creating a tunnel of noise around the vehicle. It creates an illusion of speed we become quite addicted to and cruise to victory, finishing 5.002 seconds ahead of the field.

Saving the best 'til last we tackle what would turn out to be our favourite trio of tracks - the Grand Canyon, Citta di Aria and Amalfi. The Grand Canyon course is featured in Prologue and remains, as far as we can tell, identical. Maybe there are a few more adventurous photographers as you cross the finishing line, but we can't be too sure. play™, ever the Sega Rally addicts, immediately opts for the Lancia Delta HF Integrale Rally Car '92 for a little tear-arsing on the orangey clay course, bonnet-cam engaged, the Lancia bucking over every undulation. The propensity for your vehicle to just leap skywards definitely seems amped up over GT Prologue, making this a wild slice of rallying.

Like the Grand Canyon, the Citta di Aria course is yet another taken from Prologue. It was great fun back then and it remains great fun now, especially in a rally car such as the Repo/Kankunen liveried '98 Escort. Its narrow streets are a perfect contrast to the wide-open circuits we'd experienced earlier in the game.

Amalfi is another twister, though this time a mountain drive past the distinctive white houses and crystal-clear waters of Spain, the only thing missing is the smell of



TSUMAGO was first designated as a 'protected area for the preservation of traditional buildings' by



1 The Zoom function, offering up to 5x zoom

2 Camera aperture (depth of field) can be set from F-1 to F-16

3 Pan/tilt - hold down **△** and turn the analog stick to determine the angle of shot

4 Rotation - hold down **□** and turn analog to rotate the viewfinder clockwise or anticlockwise for high impact shots

Position Lap

1 2 / 2

0'05.196

Best Lap
2'36.452

Last Lap
2'36.452

Ladies and gentlemen – the G-Meter in all its (highly unnoticed) glory.

2 102 1

»

gasoline and the summer heat. Starting out around sea level, the course climbs steeply before descending again, the uneven roads a worrying presence given GT 4's predilection for allowing cars to get airborne, in fact the streets of Amalfi are barely able to contain the frankly uncouth Dodge Viper we opt for, we spend as much time threatening to flip onto its roof as it does maintaining contact with asphalt. No doubt about it, with a slightly less powerful car this ocean drive has the potential of being a wonderfully atmospheric and exciting drive.

Binding each race together as ever is a comprehensive selection of options: My Home, Car Towns, Tuner's Village, Race Event Pavilions, License Centre, Used

dealerships are also available, and considering how it's tradition for GT cars to accrue mileage, it'll definitely be worth taking this into account when deciding whether to buy or not. 'Tuner's Village' is, of course, the number one destination for car tweaking, while those infamous License Tests have been further expanded – expect tests that require a keen eye on the G-Meter whilst cornering. Circuit Areas correspond with the different race events, while Music Theatre sounds to us like a glorified name for direct access to the game's extensive soundtrack.

Much like the 'classic matches' that used to be de rigueur in football games, where the score line of a historic match could be dramatically altered with a great

Music Theatre mode sounds to us like a glorified name for direct access to Gran Turismo 4's extensive soundtrack

Car Dealerships, Music Theatre and Circuit Areas.

'My Home', of course, is a somewhat deceptive term – 'Garage' is more accurate, and it's here players will store their selection of prize autos. 'Car Towns' represent global locations of car dealerships according to manufacturer. Used-car

degree of skill, GT 4 introduces 'Mission Races' which handicap the player in some way, either delaying their start by a number of seconds, or placing them a lap behind the rest of the pack. A real test of skill then.

Another new addition to GT this time around is the 'High Score system'. Instead of rigidly

»

A timeline for all the cars in the game is provided for budding car historians.

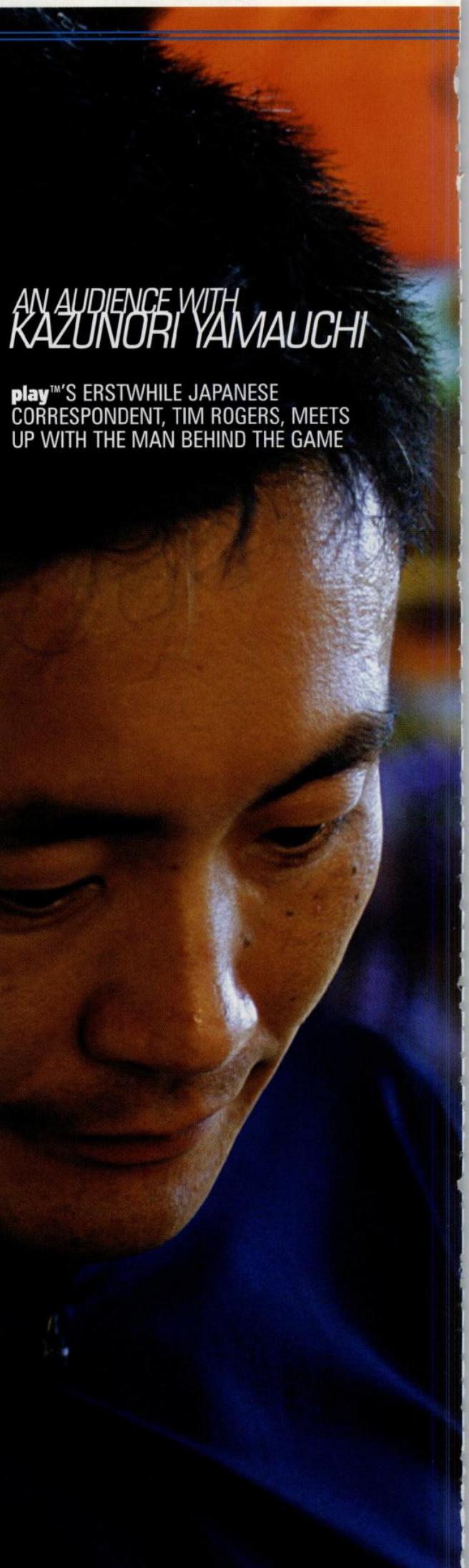
Car Selection

By History Unveiled Favorite

253 cars 51 cars --

1945 1950 1955 1960 1965 1970 1975 1980

Classic 16 cars



I have this tactic when I talk to a game producer. When someone comes in and tells us we're running overtime and to ask one more question and be done with it, I always ask the producer, "What is your dream?" He then talks for an hour and a half. Hideo Kojima, producer of *Metal Gear Solid*, talked about how he wants to go to space, build a robot of a little girl, and film an independent love story with a simple moral. I didn't ask Polyphony Digital's Kazunori Yamauchi what his dream was, because by the time our interview was over, I had realised that he didn't need one.

At the Tokyo Game Show, Yamauchi revealed that, truly, *Gran Turismo 4* will be coming out early 2005 in the UK. He debuted the new Photo mode and the B-Spec mode without the aid of note cards. In a 500-square-metre ballroom full of men in suits and women in odd flight attendant outfits, Yamauchi, the man of the (two) (long) hour(s), stood in a red Nike running shirt and a pair of black track pants. His short black hair glistened, like he'd just taken a shower. Afterward, we talked about *Gran Turismo 4*... and other things.

How did Kazunori Yamauchi get into videogames? He seems like such a... normal guy.

"I used to play a lot of games. Computer games, mostly. I never got into the Famicom stuff. The best game I ever played was *Choplifter* for the Commodore 64." By 'best game', it seems he means that it was the one that pushed him to make games. "In the beginning it was just a hobby. I made games about, well, moving objects, and accomplishing goals." Here, he laughs.

We get on the subject of how he started making games professionally. Like he said, it



Here, a videogame designer and self-proclaimed videogamer has told me that his videogame is not for videogamers, yet he plays a two-hour race of his own videogame every day

was a hobby at first. Then, he started to get more and more proficient with programming in general, and this gave him the idea that he might as well make it a career. He developed a physics engine "kind of by accident", and decided to make a PlayStation game out of it. This was in 1994, when Sony Computer Entertainment Japan was in the midst of their great search for a PlayStation mascot. With the help of some artists adept at making sellable characters, Yamauchi produced *Motor Toon Grand Prix*, which sold well enough to spawn a sequel (which was a hit in Europe and the US) and earn Yamauchi a permanent position of sorts at Sony Computer Entertainment Japan.

"Everybody employed as a game designer at Sony Computer Entertainment Japan, back then, had to write a new game idea-suggestion once a day. It was a big responsibility. You write one a day, seven a week, thirty-one a month. Every employee in game design has to do this. If the president likes the idea, he summons you. The form for writing down the ideas has a lot of blanks. What will the gameplay be like? What will the graphical style be like? What kind of music are we looking at? Why would people want to play it? All that stuff."

When did Kazunori Yamauchi get the idea for *Gran Turismo*?

"My first day at the job, I took one of those forms and wrote, 'I want to drive my own car on my television.'"

And that got him a meeting with the president of the company?

"Yep."

And since then, *Gran Turismo* has been his life?

"For the most part, yeah."

So, I ask him, at the time you wrote 'my car', what car were we talking about?

Yamauchi points an index finger at me, and smiles. "That's the interesting part. I didn't have a car."

Now he has hundreds of them. Once American, European and Japanese car magazines alike caught wind of how beautifully and lovingly *Gran Turismo* was pieced together, they wrote features on it, and forced waves of millions of non-gamers to buy PlayStation consoles and DualShock controllers. Shortly after the game's popularity sank in, begging phone calls came from car manufacturers who had refused to let their cars appear in 'a videogame'. Sony, incidentally, stopped looking for a cute cartoon mascot. Yamauchi opened a bigger studio in Tokyo's spacious Koto-ku, where he can test-drive all the cars he wants.

"Since then," he says proudly, "he can work on his game as long as he wants, and

people don't complain because they know what's coming."

At this point in our interview, Yamauchi has already driven me down a ten-minute detour into my tastes in music, cars and videogames and suggested I get treated for my ear infection. He's a nice guy. He even asks me to send him an MP3 of one of my band's songs as soon I can, so he can see about putting it into the game. We've got enough of a rapport going, I figure, so it's time for me to jump out and accuse him – "You say your game is for either 'casual car fans' or 'hardcore *Gran Turismo* fans'; what about games for, you know, fans of games?"

Yamauchi laughs, "Well, not everyone's a gaming fan".

He has me there.

What about him, though? Didn't he get into videogames because he liked videogames? Does he still play videogames?

"I only play *Gran Turismo* 3. I have a thirty-two inch television and the Logitech steering wheel."

How often does he play *Gran Turismo*?

"Pretty much every day." He goes home and runs a sixty-lap race in his custom Honda S-2000.

I am, quite honestly, shocked at this. Here, a videogame designer and self-proclaimed videogamer has told me that his videogame is not for videogamers, yet he plays a two-hour race of his own videogame every day. This man is clearly brilliant at something. The goal of *Gran Turismo* is simple, he tells me: to make a simulator of staggering depth with beautiful enough graphics to attract anyone's attention. The game is tenaciously programmed, therefore the fans know never to expect disappointment. The man commands respect from low-level employees because he is making something that is simultaneously a videogame, a useful piece of simulation software, and damned pretty to anyone who's ever seen a car.

I saved what I thought was my best question for last: Now there are all these racing games like *OutRun 2* on Xbox with its free-flowing, easy-going feel, or *F-Zero GX* on GameCube with its impossible speeds, or *Burnout 3*, with its, well, crashing. Racing games that are fun and videogamey, with mass appeal. Do you ever think you might make a game like this?

I was expecting a long answer. I only had to expect that answer for half a second before Kazunori Yamauchi grinned and shot me his reply.

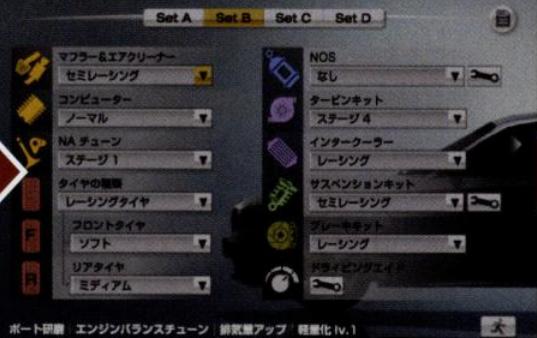
"Not for a second."

I don't have to ask this guy about his dreams, I realise. He's living his life like a long drive on a highway in his favorite car. I am filled with respect. ■



Pit crews and in-depth customisation options – just two examples of Gran Turismo 4's increased attention to detail. Tinkermen everywhere can now be happy.

Parts Change / Setting



500,000r 350ps

RACE CAR

Price
Cr 10,000,000



Fairlady Z '02 500,000 26 AUG

Spoon Fit Race Car '03

Year: 2003 ■ Type: FF ■ Power: 350 ps / 5000 rpm ■ Torque: 350 kg.m / 4000 rpm



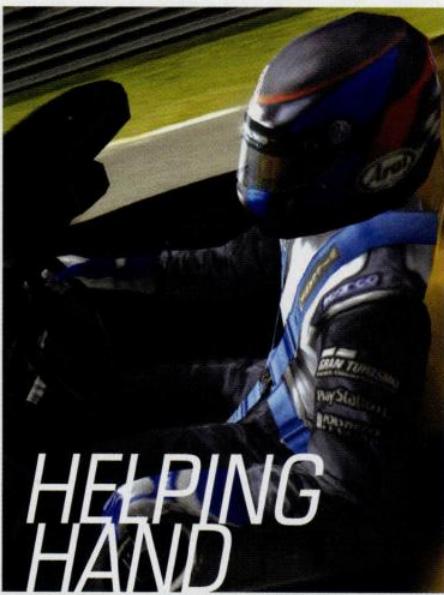
The Replay mode has been extensively reworked to bring you images like this.

» adhering to the same set of rules that dictated what performance level of car you can enter into a race, Polyphony Digital is leaving the choice to the player. If you want to enter a 600bhp behemoth into a field of 150bhp jalopies so be it, just be warned you'll be gleaning a pitiful amount of points for your endeavor. On the flip side, thrash a fleet of Dodge Vipers with a Winnebago and you can expect to reap maximum rewards.

In many ways GT 4 is surprising – it's surprising to discover how its current form is a direct result of Kazunori Yamauchi's singular vision stemming from his desire to drive his own car on his television. It's surprising just how deeply Yamauchi wishes to delve into his car obsession: GT 4 is as much about the frightening number

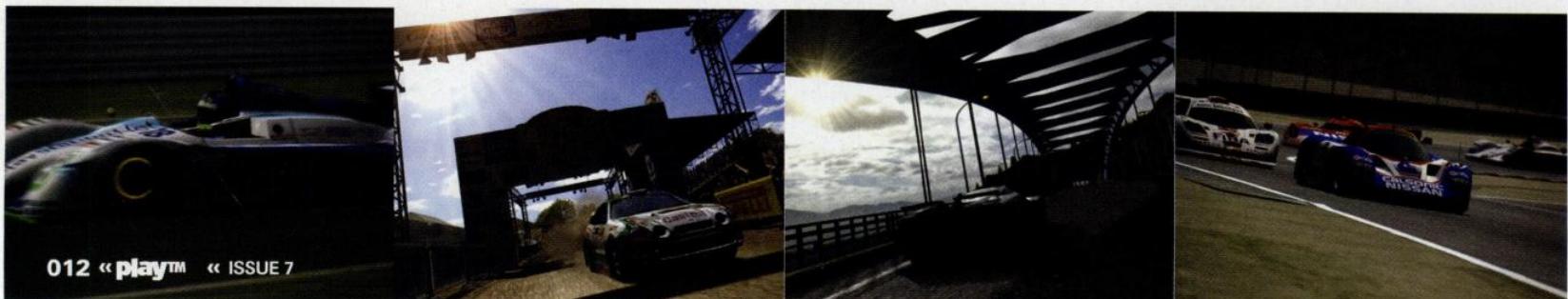
The B-Spec mode and the photographic options are unexpected developments that fit beautifully within GT 4

of cars and tracks as it is about the frightening detail of the bodywork, or the physics engine. The B-Spec mode and the photographic options are equally unexpected developments that fit beautifully within GT 4's overall remit – satisfying car enthusiasts. These intriguing features ensure that even though Kazunori is yet to implement seemingly obvious elements such as car damage, or AI that makes it feel like opponents are actually racing you instead of just out for a Sunday drive, or online capability, GT 4 is likely to enrapture almost all of the *Gran Turismo* series' fanatics, the only question that remains is whether in spite of these omissions, GT 4 will convince gamers enjoying the likes of *Burnout 3* that Yamauchi's vision is relevant to them. ■



Like many other racing games, GT 4 gives players the option of driving with or without driving aids. GT 4 offers players a total of four aids – anti-lock brakes, traction control, active stability control and active steering. The contrast between driving with aids switched on and off is instantly obvious. In full Brainiac mode, play™ revisited the George V course opting for a Mini Cooper 1.3i '98 in British Racing Green, tackling the course, first with driving aids off, then with them back on. The sluggish steering of a vehicle without active steering is the most instantly noticeable difference, though no doubt each individual aid plays its part. Just how significant is the difference in performance? How about 9 seconds per lap? Without doubt it'll take a hugely skilled player to make up that kind of deficit.

As an answer to the rash of racing games offering the opportunity to mod your car to within an inch of its life, GT 4 has greater increased the scope of the modifications that can be performed on each vehicle including superchargers and NOS, which should please fans of *Fast And The Furious* immensely. Just don't expect to be able to roll twenty inches strong on your own ludicrously large rims though.



play™ SAVAGING THE WORLD FOR THE LATEST...



NEWS



18 PSP UPDATE

The PlayStation Portable is coming closer and closer to reality (and your pocket); **play™** has the latest lowdown and rumour roundup. It's looking good, folks...



22 STATES OF PLAY

Arnie's not done with videogames yet. This time he's back in the form of a governor, with the power to give laws. Graeme Nicholson is here to pass judgment.

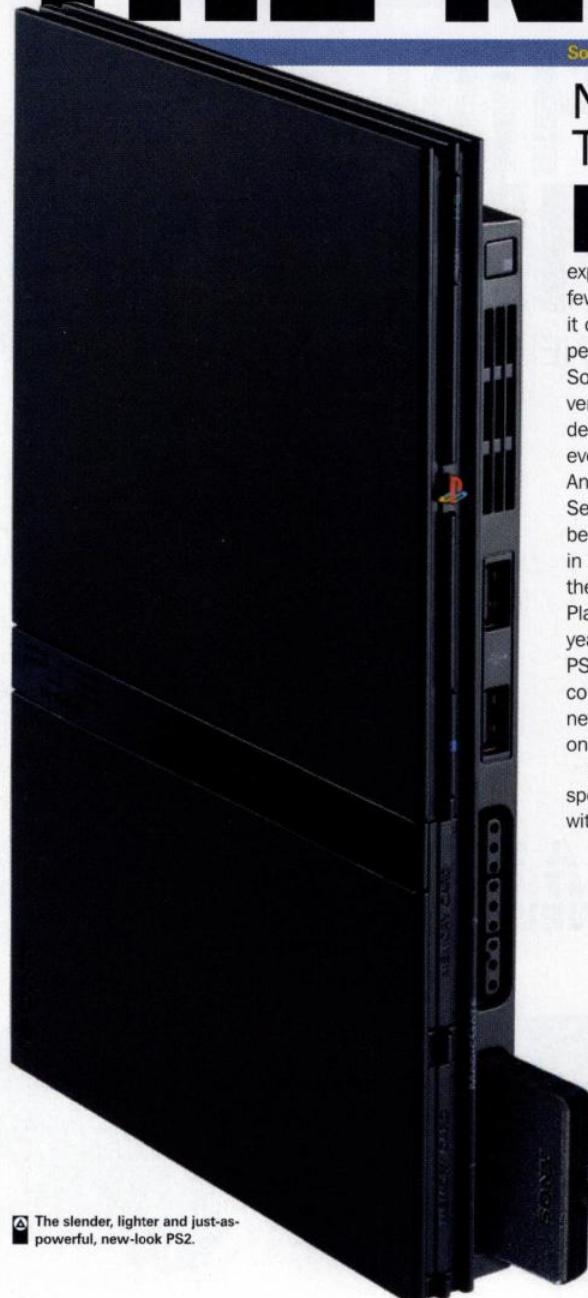


24 JAP'S EYE

BT Amazawa wishes we paid him enough to buy shares in Konami this month. Turn to page 32 to find out why. He also gets rather excited by the PSP. Again.

THE NEW PS2

Sony // PS2 relaunch



▲ The slender, lighter and just-as-powerful, new-look PS2.

NO, WE HADN'T EXPECTED IT TO BE THIS SMALL, EITHER

If there were to be a big hardware launch at the end of October, you could be forgiven for having expected to read about it in **play™** a few months beforehand. Nonetheless, it can't have escaped the attention of perceptive readers that on 28 October Sony released the new, slimmed-down version of PlayStation2 in Australia despite the pages of **play™** not having even mentioned it in passing. Announced only as recently as September, the remodelled PS2 can be seen as Sony's bugle call to sound in the next generation, continuing with the Japanese release of the

PlayStation Portable at the end of the year, and the inevitable onslaught of PS3 after next year's E3. It even comes equipped with a built-in network port in an effort to encourage online gaming.

It's a good example of how the speed of new technology is increasing with each generation – after all, the

redesigned PSone was released to cushion the price jump to a PS2, rather than a full year before the technology shift gathered momentum. However, having already shipped an astounding 72 million PlayStation2 units worldwide, Sony is confident that the PlayStation2's attractive new design and crash-diet-weightloss will encourage those consumers still stuck back in the PSone age to upgrade to a new-look PS2 before the option becomes a mid-price second to the Cell-chip powered, Blu-ray supported PlayStation3, due to be unveiled at next year's E3.

"The introduction of the new PlayStation2 is part of our long term vision for the platform," offered SCEA's Jack Tretton. "We are pleased to bring the sleek, redesigned product to the market in time for the holiday season, and expect consumer enthusiasm for the new model to translate into robust sales." ■



The new model gets modelled by a model.
We get paid to write these captions.



Sony // PS2 relaunch

GETTING THIN FOR THE WINTER

SONY SLIMS DOWN FOR THE NEXT GENERATION



Regardless of how cynically you view the videogame market in terms of how it fleeces its punters for a quick buck, Sony's decision to redesign the PlayStation2 this side of 2005 is sure to garner a great deal of consumer attention this Christmas. No other manufacturer has thrust a new piece of home console hardware into the marketplace for this year's festivities, and Sony will be hoping that becomes the trump card that works in its favour, especially since that now – after almost five years of constant usage – there are probably a lot of PS2 units no longer under warranty out there that are beginning to look slightly worse for wear.

Of course, even without the goliath that is *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* (and we thank you all for pausing the

game long enough to read this news story), Sony has a number of A-list titles it could feasibly bundle with its new machine, though nothing has been confirmed at the time of writing. Despite being stripped of its online content, for example, *Gran Turismo 4* is still a must-have title to most gamers, and could even draw some of the hardcore racing market from Xbox now that Sony's hardware sits at the 'magic' \$250 price point touted by SCEE president David Reeves throughout the PS2's lifecycle. *The Getaway: Black Monday* is also a strong candidate after a successful first run, and we should

could not discount the possibility of *Prince of Persia: Warrior Within* finding its way into a hardware box after the success of last year's Silver-PS2-and-*Sands Of Time* pack.

But there are some 'novelty' factors that could also encourage gamers to upgrade from old to new. For example, the design of the new model is very different to that of its big brother, substituting the PS2's sliding DVD tray in favour of a flip-top model. It is also, unbelievably, a quarter of the size of the old PlayStation2 by volume, and at 900g is less than half the weight, and measures only 2.8cm in thickness (just

over an inch). The result is a machine that looks far cooler than its cumbersome sibling ever could. "We did it for PlayStation and now this time for PlayStation2," David Reeves told onlookers at the unit's unveiling. "This totally redesigned, network-ready model will demonstrate that PlayStation has again the design flair and innovation that has made [it] the world's best loved and most successful games console."

The new PS2 is compatible with a new circular stand and mini-multitap, which were revealed alongside the new machine – Sony ensuring that anybody who picks one up will be able to continue their gaming life without having to take too many backward steps (it features USB ports for other peripherals as before). However, it has

"SONY HAS A NUMBER OF A-LIST TITLES IT COULD BUNDLE WITH ITS NEW MACHINE"





The next PlayStation 2 – actual size. If you don't believe us, just buy one and hold it to the page. The more observant of you will notice that the USB ports have been relocated, that the 'On' switch has morphed in shape and that the 'Eject' button has shifted over to the left. Small details aside though, doesn't it just look beautiful?



Another big seller gets a sequel release in time for Christmas with *The Getaway: Black Monday*.



The Prince will return this Christmas, older and darker – but will he have more luck this year?

been confirmed that old multitaps will not be compatible with the new hardware due to the shape of the ultra-thin casing. As also expected by many (in this region, at least), the unit has been shorn of its expansion port too, meaning it is incompatible with Sony's Hard Drive. This decision leaves gamers holding out for *Final Fantasy XI* with the option of buying a PC to continue playing what was once a PlayStation-exclusive series.

familiar now that to do so could cause more harm than good.

Either way, it should be a bumper Christmas for Sony Computer Entertainment, even if its sister music division has been feeling the noose tighten of late. With titles such as *Burnout 3*, *Star Wars Battlefront* and *Psi-Ops* already on the shelf and getting noticed, and other potential top-sellers such as *Need For Speed Underground 2*, *Pro Evo 4*, *Lord Of*

IT SHOULD BE A BUMPER CHRISTMAS FOR SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT

Another issue still unconfirmed when play™ went to press – but very much confirmed as you read this – is whether or not the redesigned PlayStation2 unit will come with a different name, as was the case when the original, grey PlayStation was crushed down into the white-bubble PSone. Judging from the prototype packaging demoed by Sony along with the hardware, however, it seems unlikely that the name will change at all, the PS2 branding perhaps having become so

The Rings: The Third Age, *SingStar Party*, *EyeToy: Play 2*, *Viewtiful Joe* and *Killzone* all just appearing, it will have a full arsenal with which to entice add-on software purchases with those new PS2s. The rest of us (well, those of us that can pull ourselves away from *San Andreas* for more than five minutes at a time, anyway) can look forward to possibly the most satisfying gaming Christmas yet, keeping one eye under the tree for a small rectangular present with our name on it. ■

SPEC SAVERS

THE MANUFACTURING COST REDUCTION MUST BE A FORTUNE JUST BASED ON THE PLASTIC SAVED. AND IT LOOKS CUTE AS HELL, TOO. WE LOOK UNDER THE BONNET OF THE NEW PS2

DIMENSIONS:

230mm (wide) x 152mm (deep)
x 28mm (high).

About 23% of the volume of the current PlayStation2. It really isn't all that much bigger than a PSP.

WEIGHT:

900g
45% of the current model, which, let's face it, only weighs as much as an Xbox's big toe anyway.

COLOUR:

Charcoal Black
Though we give it until about Easter before we see a couple of new tones.

PRICE:

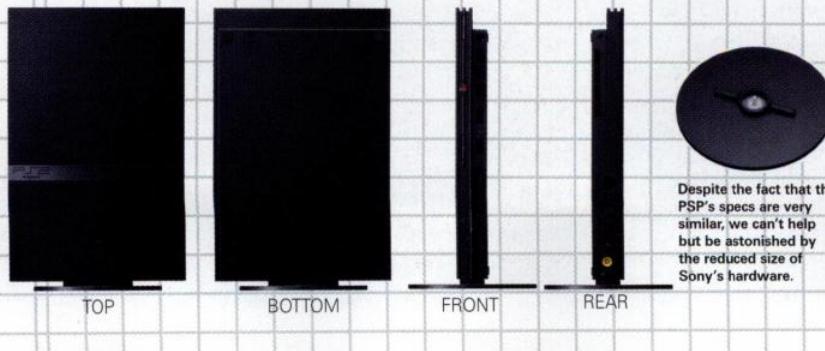
around \$250
But expect retailers to offer some low-priced bundles.

POWER REQUIREMENTS:

DC 8.5V
Comes with a power pack to save internal space, just like PSone.

BUILT-IN:

2 x controller ports
2 x memory card ports
2 x USB connector
1 x 10BASE-T Network connector
AV Cable
AV Multi-out connector
Has everything your old, fossilized PS2 has, but without needing a network adaptor screwed into the back of it. Simple.



Despite the fact that the PSP's specs are very similar, we can't help but be astonished by the reduced size of Sony's hardware.

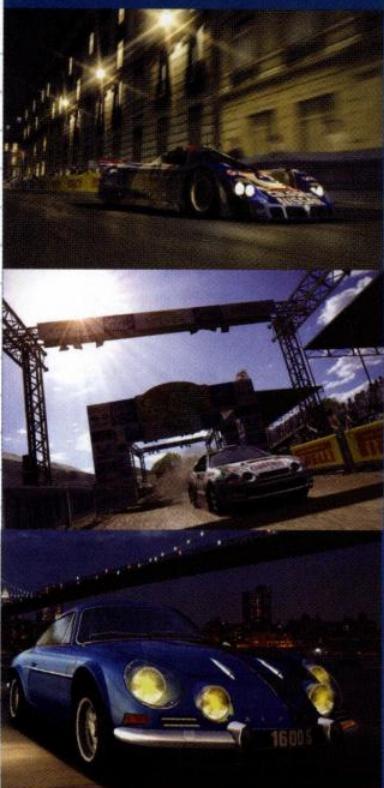
GENTLEMEN, STOP YOUR ENGINES!

STILL ON THE ROAD, BUT NO LONGER ONLINE

Following the speculation of the last few months, Sony has finally announced that *Gran Turismo 4* will be a Quarter One, 2005 release. However, the game's publisher has also announced that it will be releasing *GT4* without any of its promised online elements, apparently due to localisation constraints.

The news will come as a shock to many gamers who had expected to be spending some quality time online with *GT4*, especially since Polyphony Digital's racing simulator has been subject to so many last-minute setbacks already, as well as multiple development delays. Sony has also suggested that it will still be releasing a network-compatible version of the *Gran Turismo 4* code some time in 2005, which we hope will be released at a cut-down price.

If this is the case, then *GT4* will eventually have four separate versions of code available; the initial, limited *Prologue* release, the standalone box code, the online code and the apparently very similar PSP conversion. Expect play™ to bring you further news regarding any or all of these in a future issue. You have read our feature starting on page 6, haven't you?



No longer online, will *GT4* still have enough to captivate its long-suffering fans?

Once upon a time, Acclaim could command a stand at a consumer show to rival the likes of Electronic Arts. It's a sight, for better or worse, that we will never see again.



Acclaim // Game over

THE LAST DAYS OF ACCLAIM

LIKE OLD YELLER, BUT WITHOUT THE LONG-TERM TRAUMA

Call the offices of Acclaim in Melbourne during office hours and you'll hear... nothing. Acclaim was forced to close all its premises in the first week of September, marking the end of an extremely troubled month of last-ditch, desperate efforts to keep the company afloat. Staff around the world were told not to bother reporting for work as the once-mighty publisher and developer finally bit the dust. However, to suggest Acclaim's

demise was an overnight development would be far from accurate – in truth, its troubles had been building throughout the last couple of years.

Acclaim Entertainment managed to survive many industry low patches since it was founded in 1987, building operations in America, Germany, France, Spain, the UK and Japan as well as Australia. At its peak the company ran six of its own development studios, though the last few years saw fewer and fewer quality

products emerge from in-house departments (its most recent efforts have included the rather blah-blah *Gladiator: Sword Of Vengeance*, the disappointing *Alias* tie-in and the execrable *Vexx*). Rather, Acclaim had to rely heavily on its publishing of third-party-developed software such as

Criterion's *Burnout 2* and *Worms 3D*, itself a joint venture between Team 17 and Sega. It was a situation recognized by Acclaim COO Rod Cousens when he took control of the beleaguered company in 2003. "For too long," he lamented, "the wrong people were in the wrong positions, making the wrong decisions that led to the wrong products, products which the consumer, by and large, didn't want" – titles such as *BMX XXX*, which resulted in a high profile lawsuit from BMX legend Dave Mirra, and which Toys 'R' Us and Wal-Mart refused to stock in North America.

While Acclaim's financial results for 2002-2003 showed a loss of \$US84.8 million, its figures for the

"ACCLAIM'S TROUBLES HAVE BEEN BUILDING THROUGHOUT THE LAST FEW YEARS"

LEGACY OF THE DEAD

IT MAY BE GONE, BUT ITS ACHIEVEMENTS REMAIN. play™ SHOWCASES JUST A FEW OF THE GREAT GAMES ACCLAIM HAS HAD A HAND IN DURING THE LAST TEN YEARS



The original super-fast street racer. Without it, there would be no *Burnout 3*.



Acclaim distributed Sega's futuristic motorbike action title to a good reception.



The sequel was rubbish, but the original game still holds a certain charm.



An eternal reminder that Acclaim was once a developer 'on fire'.

AN INTERACTIVE DEMISE

ACCLAIM'S RECENT OUTPUT HAS BEEN LESS THAN EXEMPLARY. HERE ARE A FEW EXAMPLES, EACH ONE A NAIL IN A MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR COFFIN



TUROK EVOLUTION:
The prehistoric adventures of a futuristic dwarf. The *Driv3r*-level disappointment of 2003.



VEXX:
Stultifyingly misjudged, to the extent that it made our Feature Editor cry until he passed out.



URBAN FREESTYLE SOCCER:
Nothing but a massive insult to football and videogame fans alike. Just terrible.



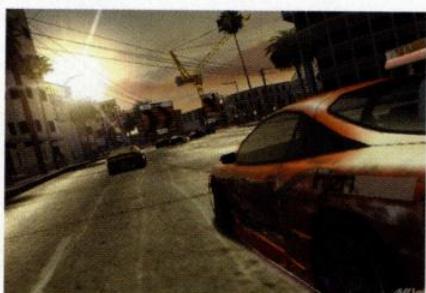
ALIAS:
A vintage license, which when uncorked, reeked of pissy vinegar. Things must be awful when you can't sell Ms Garner.



SPEED KINGS:
A barely-updated version of the arcane *Super Hang-On* formula. Now go play *Burnout 3*.



SHADOWMAN: SECOND COMING
Showed a complete misunderstanding of what made the first game good.



Financed by Fund4Games, *Juiced* is safe from the bailiffs. Expect a name change as Acclaim owns the title rights.



Vexx, offering a performative mime of Acclaim's last two years. There were plenty more offenders equally responsible.



Vivendi Universal Games has distribution rights to *A Bard's Tale* in North America, but will we ever see it released in Europe?



Stole the very decent *Tony Hawk's* template and made good with it.



Floaty racing title which gave even the mighty *WipEout* a run for its money.



Formerly *Puzzle Bobble*, but still our favourite puzzle game of all time.



Even managed to make rollerblading seem enticing. Well, nearly anyway.



VU OF THE RISING SUN

» SHORT STORY



Konami has struck up a deal with Vivendi Universal Games to publish its software titles in Japan. Beginning with *Van Helsing* (September), Konami will be releasing *Crash Twinsanity* on 9 December, as well as *Red Ninja: End Of Honor* early in 2005. "Japan is an important market to VU Games," bleated CEO Bruce Hack, "and Konami's strong distribution network will greatly increase our exposure in this region."

HALF PRICE PSX

» SHORT STORY



We're still awaiting an initial release in Australia, but according to www.gamesindustry.biz, many retailers have slashed the cost of the PSX unit by half in an effort to recoup some consolation sales. This means the basic, 160Gb model now sells for the equivalent of \$480, with the 250Gb model retailing for as little as \$650. It is unclear if this will affect our chances of ever seeing a PAL release for Sony's hybrid PS2-hard drive.

A GOLDEN TICKET?

» SHORT STORY



Warner Bros, Global Star Software and High Voltage Software have announced a partnership to produce the game adaptation of *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*. Warner Bros currently has Tim Burton directing a remake of the classic Seventies *Willy Wonka* movie, with Johnny Depp stepping into the shoes of Gene Wilder (above). It's almost as if JK Rowling just can't churn 'em out fast enough for the franchise machine to exploit 'em these days...

A SHORTS
MUST THERE BE EVEN ONE?

SHORT STORY <>



We thought the barrel had been scraped clean, but SCI this month announced it will be bringing Eighties neon-fest *Highlander* to PS2 in 2005. The license, which has spawned three movies and a TV series (as well as the legend that is Shihhhhean Connery playing an 'Egyptsshun'), should probably be a one-on-one swordfight-led action title, but don't be surprised if it becomes a futuristic cart racer complete with collectible sword icons by the time it's released.

LAW DEAL

SHORT STORY <>



The Governor is taking charge again, this time passing a Californian bill that requires retailers to post content information clearly on videogames. The bill, known as Assembly Bill 1793, had originally asked that M-rated adult games get the same treatment as pornography and come with a label reading 'material harmful to children', but was watered down following a strong public reaction.

MONKEY VS SNAKE

SHORT STORY <>



Konami has revealed a new game mode in *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater*. Provisionally titled 'Monkey & Snake', it sees our intrepid jungle soldier battle the fantastic monkeys from *Ape Escape*. From the look of this shot, it seems that the lights on the simian's heads go red when they spot you, while apparently the deal between Sony and Konami means that Snake will be making an appearance in the next *Ape Escape* title, too.

PSP ROUND-UP

PLAY™ ROUNDS UP THE UNADDRESSED PSP-RELATED EVENTS AND RUMOURS OF THE LAST FEW MONTHS

This month sees the Japanese launch of Sony's handheld, however, there are still developments happening in the world of the PlayStation Portable every day with the PSP's initial launch getting ever closer, and after a wildly successful public debut at the Tokyo Game Show, the volume of PSP-related news has suddenly increased at an exponential rate.

First up this month came the news that Sony has bought movie goliath Metro Goldwyn Mayer (MGM), which in theory gives it an immediate catalogue of over 3,000 movies it can convert to UMD and release for PSP. The deal, which is said to be worth just under US\$5 billion, puts paid to fears that the movie-

playback function of Sony's portable would only receive support from Sony Pictures' own in-house movies as, among others, the MGM deal gives the rights to the *Rocky* and *007* films. Of course, it's worth pointing out that Sony already owns Columbia-Tristar, home of *Ghostbusters*, *Men In Black* and *Spider-Man 2* among many, many others.

Next up, Sony decided to do a u-turn on MP3 support with all its digital music devices, including the PSP, after the company's music division released new, lower projections for the end-of-year period. It is believed that Sony made the decision after receiving a beating in the revenue stakes from Apple's phenomenally popular iPod and its online iTunes Music Store. Previously, Sony had only pledged to support its own ATRAC3 version of the MP3 format, and opens up a whole new world of musical choice available legally over the internet.

However, it's not all been good news for Sony where pre-promotion for the PSP is concerned (especially since

Nintendo's DS is also due for release in Japan and America before the end of 2004), as the still-unconfirmed issue of battery life reared its head once again. For example, industry website www.gamesindustry.biz

has reported that Sony will restrict power usage in PSP games in an effort to squeeze more juice out of each battery recharge. The guidelines set out by Sony (as suggested by the report) confirm that PSP development kits will feature a 'battery emulator', which will evaluate the projected battery life available for each game. Whether the concept of Sony limiting the amount of

"THE \$5 BILLION DEAL PUTS PAID TO FEARS THAT SONY'S PORTABLE WOULD ONLY RECEIVE SUPPORT FROM SONY'S IN-HOUSE MOVIES"

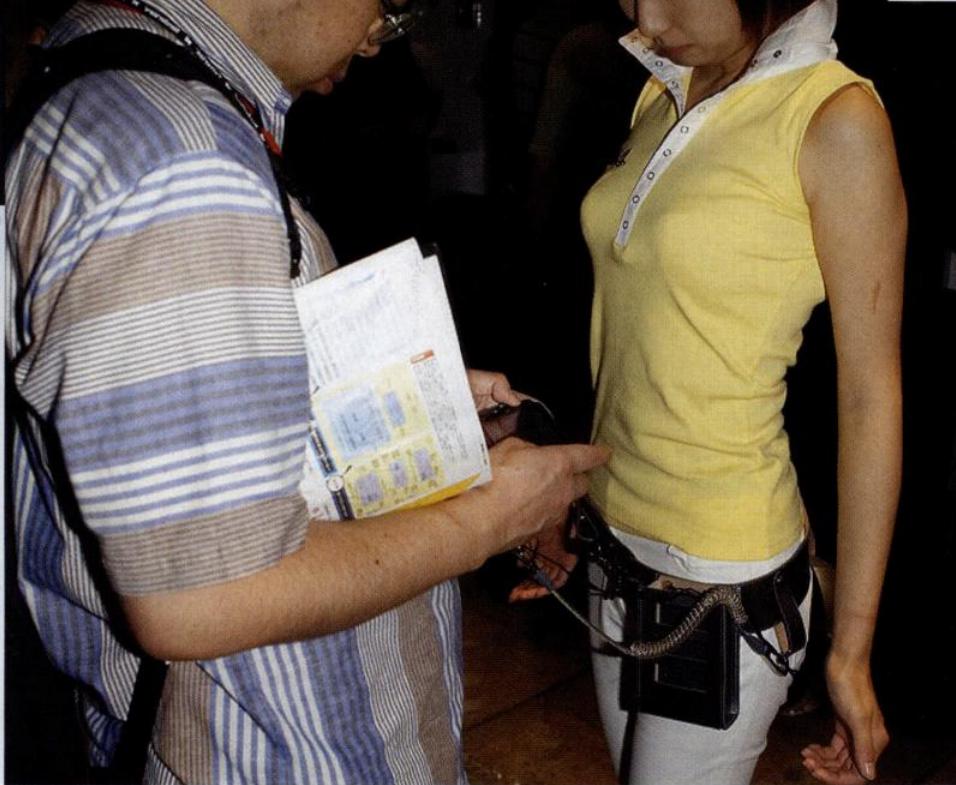
PSPROMOTION

STARE AT THIS IMAGE AND THE FUTURE WILL JUMP OUT AT YOU

This is the first billboard poster to be released in Japan for the PlayStation Portable, which if all goes to plan, will be released in the East before the next issue of **play™** even hits the shelves. Despite

looking like a Rorschach test rendered on a Commodore 64 (or the sort of optical illusion everyone gets as email spam), the bizarre black-and-white square of pixels is actually an indicator of the incredible rate consumer technology is now developing in.

Regular **play™** readers will be familiar with Sony boss Ken Kutaragi's dream of seeing inter-connectivity between all Sony's



▲ In order to play PSP at the Tokyo Game Show, you had to play it attached to a stranger's belt-strap. No, really. There were many of these ladies 'on show', while punters queued for hours in order to hand-hold their goodies. We mean the PSP, of course.

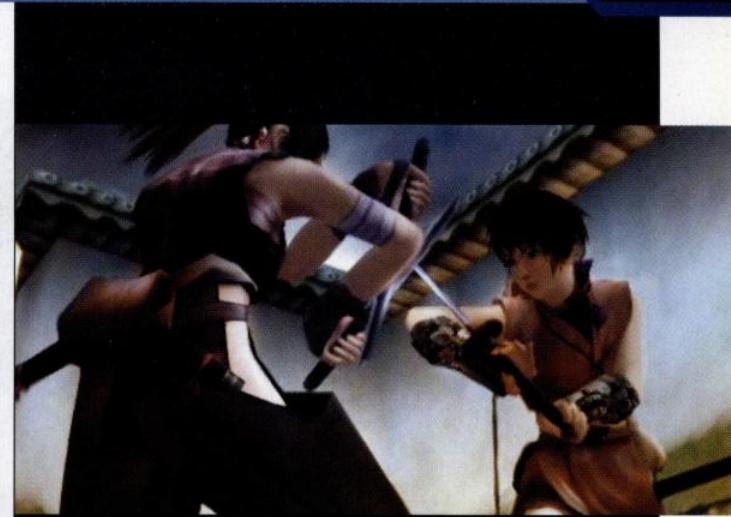
FMV in a game can be seen as a positive issue or not, the announcement drew a number of naysayers out of the woodwork to slam the PSP's supposed gaming life, including Nintendo's notorious US head of sales and marketing, Reggie Fils-Amie. "Let me tell you something," he patronised, "Those little women at the Tokyo Game Show with those portable consoles strapped to them... What you didn't see is that those women were having to go recharge the batteries every two hours!" Of course, Sony has, as

usual, chosen not to comment on Nintendo's PSP-bashing efforts, and is yet to officially confirm any fixed battery life or price point for the PSP. **play™** recommends that you read comments such as this with one eyebrow raised until we actually get to hold a PSP in our hands and tell you everything you'll ever need to know. ■



► Despite being so close to its release date, there's still much speculation regarding the PSP, with some growing concern over its battery life.

home products from phones to hi-fis to slippers. However, recent advances in Japanese mobile phone technology mean that this clutch of squares is actually a web address disguised as some sort of crazy, modern art barcode. Apparently, all you need to do is point your videophone at the image and take a snapshot, whereupon your phone will 'read' the image and direct you straight to Sony's official PSP website. But don't take us the wrong way – we still know in our hearts that the future of handheld gaming is all about controlling your racing games with a stylus. As if... ■



SHADOW WARRIORS

TENCHU FRANCHISE MOVES TO SEGA

Sega has released some early screenshots of *Tenku: Fatal Shadows*, and from the looks of them, From Software and K2 are going to deliver a satisfyingly bloody stealth adventure when it is released next spring. The sequel to the hugely popular *Wrath Of Heaven*, *Fatal Shadows* will enable control of two playable ninja – former heroine Ayame and newcomer Rin – and has been redesigned to require more minute-to-minute stealth decisions (as opposed to trial-and-error frustration).

In addition to increasing the number of move sets you would expect from a *Tenku* sequel, Sega has also added the ability to hide corpses and breathe underwater for a limited time. Sega Europe director Mike Hayes even promises that *Fatal Shadows* "stretches the boundaries of what a quality stealth game can be", making good on **play™**'s hopes when From Software picked up the license from Activision back in August. ■



► There's another dose of ninja stealth due next year, courtesy of From and Sega. This time, both Ayane and new face Rin can be guided to silent victory.



► Faster than the human eye, but quieter than the wind. The **play™** team is truly excited by the prospect of swiftly decapitating these two fools.

RUMOUR CONTROL

ADD SALT TO TASTE

Is PS2 gaming about to hit a new low that's perhaps even more offensive than the existence of America's *Ten Most Wanted*? If you believe your rumours, it is – German developer Replay Studios is apparently working on a third-person 'disaster survival title' based on famous historical disasters including the 1985 Mexican earthquake, the sinking of The Titanic, 9/11 and, erm, Hiroshima. Yeah, we thought so too.



Call us crazy but we're guessing that this is Colossus, not Wanda.

In other news, while many sources are suggesting that next-gen development will cost twice as much as for the current generation, Sony has suggested that Blu-ray disc production will cost only half that of current PS2 DVD mastering and duplication. So games should cost exactly the same as they do now. Oh, and try not to get too upset, but we're hearing strong murmurs suggesting that *Ico* pseudo-sequel *Wanda And The Colossus* will not be released in Europe, but will remain a Japan-only title. However, we'll have a full report on *Wanda* next issue, when we're sure we'll confirm or deny this. Additionally, it transpires that the next-gen *Mortal Kombat* title we suggested was in development a few months back could be called *Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks*, as Midway has recently filed to trademark the title.



More, more, give us more... it's good to see *Mortal Kombat* again, isn't it?

KOEI // *Kessen III*

"KOEI HAS BEEN SECRETLY WORKING ON ITS NEW GAME ENGINE FOR SOME TIME NOW"



KESSEN TELL

A THIRD STRIKE FOR KOEI'S EPIC BATTLES

These are the first shots of the latest instalment in the *Kessen* saga, which looks to improve heavily on the first two games in the series by including as many battles as both previous titles together. Though *Kessen III* is not released until next summer, KOEI has been secretly working on its newly-improved Group Control Engine for some time now, and is already confident that it will employ the power of the PS2 to maximum efficiency in order to add new levels of depth to the proceedings.

Following the (apparently) famous story of Oda Nobunaga and his quest

to bring peace to Japan, *Kessen III* will enable full control of each of your units, as well as the ability to switch between control of the entire group or just its commanding officer. The 110 suits of armour and 80 helmets available should give us a strong idea of the huge level of depth KOEI is aspiring to with the leveling-up of your characters, while over two hours of beautifully-rendered cut-scenes will bolster out a rich narrative that separates each chapter and battle thematically. Expect to see a full preview of *Kessen III* in the pages of **play™** some time in the new year. ■



We were rooting for Acclaim to be renamed 'Lazarus Games' or something.



Interview With A Made Man (from the same creative stable as TV's *The Sopranos*) looks to have been saved.



Kessen III promises to feature as many battles as the previous two put together.



KOEI looks to have filled the battlefield with fully controllable horsemen.

Acclaim // Reclaimed

ACCLAIM SAVED?

STOP PRESS – EX-CHIEF SAVES PROPERTIES

Trade newspaper MCV has announced that a new developer may "emerge from the ashes of Acclaim", possibly saving some of the mid-development titles the publisher held rights over, and even restoring some of the jobs lost after the company's closure. As reported on pages 16–17, Acclaim was forced to file for Chapter 7 bankruptcy with debts in excess of \$100million at the end of August, but it now seems that we may not have seen the last of the once-great developer.

According to the report, former global Acclaim boss Rod Cousens has combined his clout with LA-based Europlay Capital Advisors, and acquired the recently-closed Acclaim studios in Manchester

and Cheltenham, which had employed 160 members of staff. Europlay has previously brokered the sale of Shiny Entertainment to Atari and TDK Interactive's sale to Take Two.

The assets Cousens has supposedly 'saved' from development hell are said to include mafia action title *Interview With A Made Man* and PC game *Heist*, as well as two other unnamed titles. The new company, which will not be allowed to trade under the Acclaim banner (but is expected to be called 'Exclaim'), also hopes to re-acquire the rights to Fund4Games and Juice Games' racer *Juiced*. Expect **play™** to update you on the new company's progress as soon as anything is revealed publicly. ■



Presumably, getting your ass kicked by a woman is even more arousing if she's naked.



US courts ruled Sony's DualShock infringed two patents. The suit was first filed in 2002.

LAWSUIT CORNER

DOUBLE-DUTY IN THE DOCK

In the first of two lawsuit-related news stories to come to light this month, *Dead Or Alive* developer Tecmo has succeeded in its attempts to ban a hacked PS2 version of *DOA 2*. The twist here, however, is that the case, aimed at Japanese developer West Side, took umbrage at a patch which enables gamers to play with the lovely Kasumi in the nude.

While it may come as a shock to many gamers that Tecmo could object to nudity in a game which enables you to alter the buoyancy of the female characters' oversized chest appendages at will, the Japanese Supreme court felt West Side's hack was worthy of £10 000 (\$24 000) in damages and ruled in favour of the game's original coding team.

However, Sony found itself on the opposite end of a copyright ruling this month, when it was revealed that the vibration function in the PS2's DualShock control pad (as seen in over 70 million homes worldwide) infringes

upon two outstanding patents held by US tech firm Immersion Technology. The patents in question (numbered 6,275,213 and 6,424,333 if you want to check them out) relate to the 'haptic feedback' process created by the spinning vibro-motors in each corner of the unit.

The ruling follows a separate suit Immersion settled with Microsoft in 2003, which resulted in Bill Gates' powerhouse coughing up \$26million to license the technology for future use. According to videogames website gamesindustry.biz, Sony will now be forced to pay \$82million to Immersion, though it suggests that the triumphant party will 'lease' its technology to Sony in order for DualShock production to continue. However, while Sony is expected to appeal against the ruling, it has also been suggested that Immersion will attempt to issue a permanent injunction against the PS2 manufacturer, theoretically resulting in a complete redesign of the world-famous control pad. ■



The lovely Kasumi, in one of her many volleyball costumes.
The irony of Tecmo's victory is not lost on us.



RISING SUN, SLEEPING DRAGON

» SHORT STORY



This month Revolution Software released *Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon* in Japan. Having been localised for the Eastern market, the third instalment of the much-loved series has also had its promotional art completely redesigned in order to appeal to the fruity sensibilities of the Japanese gamer. "As a fan of Japanese adventures, it's a real honour to finally see a Revolution Software game officially released in the territory," beamed Revolution MD bloke Charles Cecil.

PUTT FROM THE ROUGH

» SHORT STORY



Last month, EA was forced to recall the PS2 code of *Tiger Woods 2005* after discovering a "performance issue". The problem, which meant stores had to either exchange or fully refund affected copies, occurred after this year's update sold twice as many copies during its first week of release than last year's edition. "Even the pros hit the rough now and again," suggested the press release issued by Electronic Arts. "We expect to have impacted players back on the green with a new game shortly."

WHAT DIS?

» SHORT STORY



Midway has enlisted the skills of *Boyz N The Hood* director John Singleton to add some credence to a new title. *Fear And Respect* is a third-person crime adventure set in the streets of South Central LA, and features an innovative 'respect' meter which responds to the moral choices you make as you progress. Expect *Fear And Respect* to appear towards the end of 2005, with comparisons to *San Andreas* in tow.

GAMES WAREHOUSE

PlayStation 2



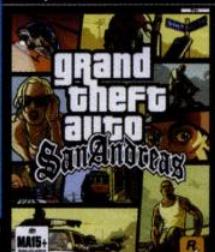
What's

PlayStation 2



your

PlayStation 2



Game?

PlayStation 2



Order Online

Secure Server

Huge Range!

No Xmas crush!

Games Delivered

Credit Card not required!



PlayStation 2



Game Boy Advance

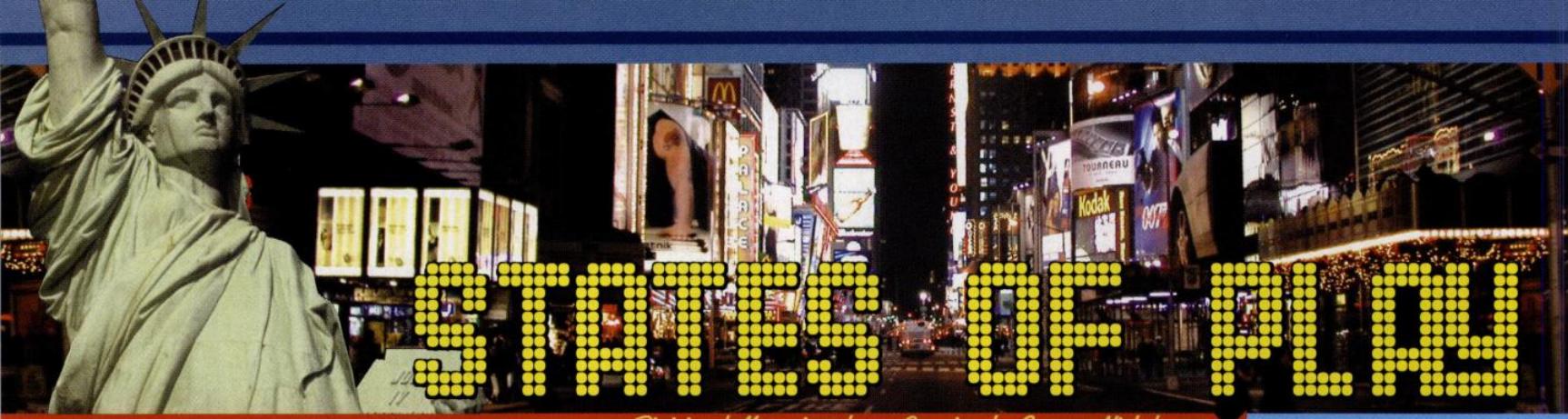


GameCube

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Disjointed Mutterings from America, by Graeme Nicholson

HE'S A COP, YOU IDIOT!

Much legal fun this month. Arnold Schwarzenegger, known on left-wing talk shows as The Governor, made it illegal to sell M-rated videogames to underage kids in the state of California, or 'Klee-FAU-nya'. When he signed the Assembly Bill 1793, Arnie brought the law – the government – into a process that was handled voluntarily by the software companies and retailers, who have self-regulated for years (like the movie industry).

Though the most likely repercussion for an errant shopkeeper is a fine, this isn't really the point. Making it a legal issue at all leaves stores open to all manner of frivolous lawsuits under the state's 17200 Unfair Business Practices statute, according to Hal Halpin, president of IEMA, the non-profit body that looks after businesses selling games. You know the kind of thing. Little Jimmy slips off his skateboard and mom decides *THUG 2* is the culprit... or the shop that sold it to him. Boom. She gets a new Hummer and some Versace jeans for her fat ass and another store goes out of business.

I have a copy of the bill. It's interesting to note that among its listed supporters are several bizarre, reactionary pressure groups like the California National Organization for Women; Dads and Daughters; the Coalition to Stop Commercial Exploitation of Children; even the Girl Scouts of Tierra del Oro, while those officially listed in opposition are people experienced in the arts that you might actually want to listen to: the American Civil Liberties Union; the Motion Picture Association of America; Recording

+

LITTLE JIMMY SLIPS OFF HIS SKATEBOARD AND MOM DECIDES THUG 2 IS THE CULPRIT



Expect Vietnam now to be blamed on *Shellshock*, not America. Finally they have an excuse.



Expect any graffiti in America to now be blamed on *Def Jam*. You may laugh, but this is the country that passed a law asking McDonalds to label their coffee as 'hot' because someone scalded themselves once.

Industry Association of America; as well as, unsurprisingly, Sony Computer Entertainment America. Where this will lead, we don't know.

In other news, I first saw *The Terminator* when I was 10-years old, and yet I still haven't pulled Bill Paxton's guts out just to get his clothes.

Next up, Sony's gamble that, as things stand today, will cost it \$US82 million.

When Immersion Corporation came knocking a few years back and said, "Oi! Here you! We came up with the idea for that vibrating rumble nonsense you use in all your controllers! Pay us or die!" (I'm paraphrasing), Sony fought the suit. Microsoft got a similar ultimatum, but decided to pay up \$US26 million to license the idea of spinny shakey bits in a joypad from Immersion. Sony did not. Now a federal jury has just ruled in favour of Immersion, declaring with legal certainty that the DualShock mechanism indeed infringes on two of Immersion's patents. \$US82 million please.

+



Expect all fear to now be blamed on *Silent Hill*, not on anything scary.



Expect all hitmen to now be blamed on *Hitman*, not crazy ex-lovers that refuse to leave you alone.

USA CHARTS

TOP 10 GAMES



01 **STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT**
ACTIVISION

02 **STREET RACING SYNDICATE**
NAMCO

03 **MADDEN NFL 2005**
EA

04 **SHELLSHOCK: NAM '67**
EIDOS

05 **BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN**
EA

06 **DRIV3R**
ATARI

07 **TEST DRIVE: EVE OF DESTRUCTION**
ATARI

08 **SLY 2: BAND OF THIEVES**
ROCKSTAR

09 **ESPN NFL 2K5**
SEGA

10 **HEADHUNTER: REDEMPTION**
SEGA

USA RELEASES

OUT NOW, OVER THERE



KATAMARI DAMACY
NAMCO



DUKES OF HAZZARD
UBISOFT

USING YOUR CHEATS CD

Exclusive

FREE WITH play™

50 EXCLUSIVE PLAYABLE CHEATS

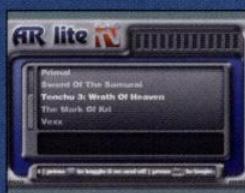
BURNOUT 3

FOR PS2

STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT
CONFLICT VIETNAM
SILENT HILL 4: THE ROOM
SHELLSHOCK: NAM '67

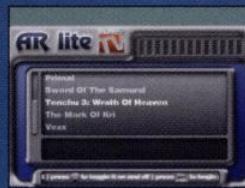
PLUS CODES FOR ALL THESE GAMES...
COLIN MCRAE 2005 • SECOND SIGHT
TERMINATOR 3: REDEMPTION • PSI-OPS • SHARK TALE

PLUS DOWNLOADABLE SAVE GAMES
SECOND SIGHT • BURNOUT 3 • RESIDENT EVIL OUTBREAK



01 REMOVE DISC FROM BOX

And insert it into your PS2. Close the drawer. Choose your language by flag.



02 CHOOSE YOUR GAME

Use your D-pad to highlight the game you want to cheat on and press X.



03 CHOOSE YOUR CHEAT

When you find the cheat you want, activate it by pressing X.

04 INSERT YOUR GAME

Don't reset your PS2; your game will automatically load with cheats activated.

FINISH ALL YOUR GAMES WITH THE PLAY™ CHEATS DISK

Need help with a game? Stuck on a boss fight? Perhaps unlimited health or ammo would help, or maybe you'd just like to skip a level you're not enjoying.

Because after all, games are there to be enjoyed, not to cause endless frustration.

If you're having any problems with your disc, call our helpline on (Sydney) 02 9460 4411, 4.00pm–6.00pm, Monday–Friday.

Capcom // Killer7



This is Kaede Smith. She's a beautiful young lady, but as a hitwoman she walks a darkened path through life.



We're still unsure how these hand-to-hand elements will be implemented. We're definitely excited, though.



Naturally, shooting a jet of blood into the sky breaks down certain invisible spirit walls throughout the game.

KILLER7

Following the Alpha preview in **play™** 4, Capcom has released a hit of new screenshots for its still-very-much-a-mystery action title *Killer7*, including several which reveal the game's hand-to-hand combat element for the first time, as demonstrated above by the lovely Kaede Smith.

Kaede, the fourth of the seven personalities embodied by the game's protagonist Harman, summons spirits to clear invisible walls by firing a shower of blood into the air. According to the website recently launched by Capcom (www.capcom.co.jp/killer7/english.html), "because she lives a life so close to death, her ability to survive life-or-death situations is beyond that of any living man", and judging by her ability to double-kick a green

bad guy to the floor we've got no reason to doubt the veracity of such a statement.

Most of the details surrounding how *Killer7* will actually play are still shrouded in cel-shaded secrecy, with few people on the planet having had a chance to get hands-on with Capcom's code-in-progress. However, a few details have been

CAPCOM'S MULTIPLE PERSONALITY DISORDER BECOMES MORE APPARENT

zombified army. Additionally, the website reveals new character Christopher Mills, a government agent and liaison to the *Killer7*, who meets with humourless lead personality Garcian Smith to brief him on proposed hits.

Still confused? Yeah, us too. But as *Killer7* isn't due for release until some point

THE DETAILS SURROUNDING KILLER7 ARE STILL SHROUDED IN CEL-SHADED SECRECY

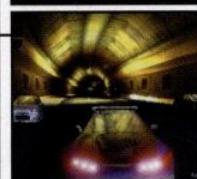
disclosed, including the fact that the only means of attack the Heaven Smile victims have is to get close to a potential victim and then explode, making evil bad guy Kun Lau's plan for world domination far more centered on being spiteful than building a

next year (and we're counting on a few delays before we see it on a shelf over here), there's still plenty of time left to get to grips with Harman Smith's disordered personalities. Expect **play™** to update you in a future issue. ■



EA PSP ETA OK

» SHORT STORY



Electronic Arts has pledged to have the PlayStation Portable versions of *Need For Speed Underground* and *Tiger Woods* ready for release with Sony's handheld hardware. The games, which are standalone titles rather than direct ports of their PS2 conversions will, if all goes to plan, be released before the end of the year in Japan, and in the spring in Europe. Good news for gamers worried about a weak launch line-up.

マチセラバ

JAP'S EYE PREVIEWS

THE GAMES WE MAY NEVER SEE...

チカラスラ
GUNSLINGER GIRL**MARVELOUS ENTERTAINMENT (OUT NOW)**

Marvelous Entertainment, makers of the beloved *Harvest Moon* franchise, bring you this touching anime-based 3D adventure game in which the protagonist is a girl who shoots things. According to the description on gunslinger-girl.com, "The girl has a mechanical body. However, she is still an adolescent child." Of course, though the game's box might lead you to believe the story never leaves a school setting, you'd best believe that there's no way – just no way in hell – that a Japanese schoolgirl, even an adolescent child one, can have a mechanical body without slinging some guns. This month sees the release of volume three in the series, which, thanks to the slow trickle of games before TGS, popped into the top ten games list after selling only 16,000 copies. ■

チカラスラ
GENSO SUIKODEN IV
KONAMI (OUT NOW)

Suikoden IV is here! Your beloved columnist, in his younger years, read the *Suikoden* novel cover-to-cover at least 108 times (that's a pun... kind of), so the first three games have been dear to me. This fourth one removes the heroes from the traditional castle setting to place them on a giant pirate ship. So, of course, the game is about pirates, and it's already available on the Korean streets for a tenth its retail price. This game will no doubt be released, and soon, wherever it is you are. I just want to let you know that it's out here, and the opinion is that it is not great. It is, however, more than good enough for people who like collecting 108 main characters. As a *Suikoden* game, it is very good. It also has nice graphics. ■

チカラスラ
YS III ~ WANDERERS FROM YS ~ TAITO
FALCOM (OUT NOW)

In their quest to regain enough money to plod further away at that dream to be the greatest boxer in the world, legendary developers at Falcom are hard at work on their PS2 port of *Ys III*. Their release of *Ys I* and *II* was very pretty, if a little sad. The original game has you running around, pushing your body into enemies to kill them. I mean, you don't even press a button to swing a sword. It's great. It's an RPG rather than an action-RPG. Just imagine – every time you run into an enemy, you're fighting a little RPG battle with them. *Ys III* was originally released in 1990, when the world was all about better graphics and gameplay. This means it was a side-scroller in which you hack things with your sword. And jump. The original plays like a loose bag of brick crumbs. The remake is the same game, with air-brushed graphics. Hopefully they've tightened up the play, gotten it on par at least with *IV* and *V*. *VI*, by the way, is coming to the West by way of Konami. It's a strictly-for-PS2 affair. ■



SAMBO MASTER ROCKS



Have I ranted about Sambo Master yet? Probably. Let's do it again. They rock. The lead singer, the Sambo Master himself, has been playing guitar for a year, though I recently learned that he played violin from age three to twenty-nine, so that counts for something. He holds his guitar against his left shoulder while he plays, and he's a rather chubby little fellow who dresses like he should be hanging out in Akihabara. Yet he does it all without being a dork, or even a loser, and his music is neither kitschy nor a novelty. He's a real rock 'n' roll star advancing the lyrical art of his language constructively (as he explains), and I've seen his band live. Oh yes. Their new single *Tsuki Ni Fuku Hana No You Ni Naruno* ('To Become Like Flowers Blowing To The Moon') is a significant act of rock.

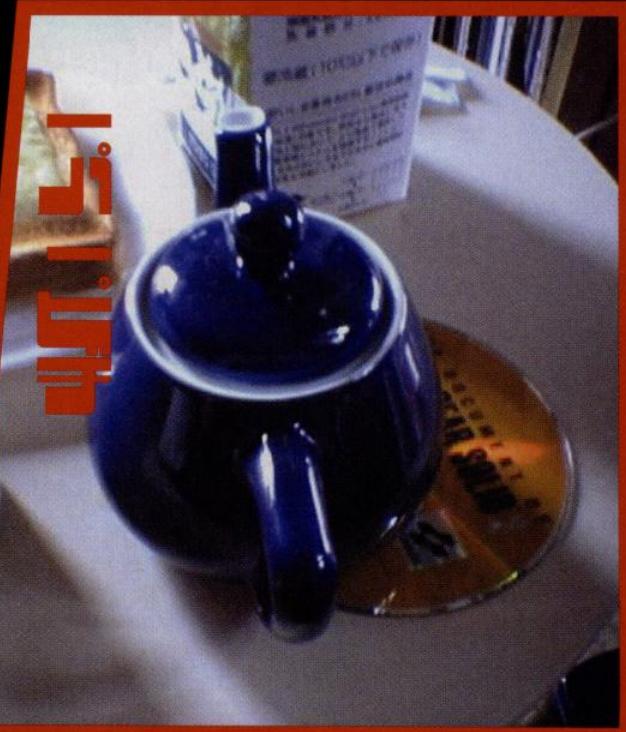
NOW YOU CAN LEARN CHINESE HISTORY AND RAISE POKEMON AT THE SAME TIME

I mention Falcom's *Genso Sangokushi* up there, don't I? It's a PC game, so we'll keep it slightly off the cuff, and down here. Let me say – it looks good. Kind of like *Breath Of Fire IV*, only with hundreds of characters, all of them named after Chinese men who once really lived. And you have these cute little monsters that hatch out of eggs, as well. The only problem is that it's for PC, and my PC sucks, and it costs 7900 yen anyway, and I could just get *Winning Eleven 8* for that much, and enough Guinness to make my roommate too drunk to beat me. Still, I love Falcom and their old series, and I've no doubt this game will be great. When the inevitable hackjob English translation surfaces, do take a look, please.



セイチカラスラ

I WISH I'D PAID ATTENTION IN ECONOMICS CLASS



According to a rather useless press release, Konami is giving all of its shareholders a premium package of *Metal Gear Solid 3* on 30 September, a full month before the wide release of the game. The producer, Hideo Kojima, has previously spoken on his disdain for the world videogames media. This press release sounds about par for the course. Meanwhile, rumours about the game are flooding the world – like, maybe it'll have no continues? Maybe that jungle level is only the first hour or so? Maybe Raiden is the hero again? The music on the preorder disc being given out at Japanese retailers – is it even real?

I asked my resident *Metal Gear Solid* freak, Tim Rogers, about this. His email reply contained only this

picture of cheezeed toast, black tea, and a teapot for which the document of *Metal Gear Solid 2* is being used as a coaster. When asked where he took it, he said, "My friend's house. In Tokyo." Which friend? His reply was "Which friend, indeed?" Hmm, according to Rogers, Kojima has been quite outspoken lately on videogames as a "transitory medium." Does this mean... no, it can't be. Or... can it? THE HORROR!!

Oh, hell. This speculation stuff is silly. I'm just going to wait until I can play the game for myself. Or... I could buy some shares in Konami. I think you need to buy a hundred shares to get the package. It's \$23.40 a share at the moment. That's... Oh dear. Maybe I should look into actually getting paid for this column. ■

PLANNING A VACATION TO JAPAN? LIKE CURRY?

Tim Rogers, *games*' kongetsu columnist, has been... taking in tourists. He's got a nice new big apartment, and is letting tourists stay there if they email him through his website. If you're going to Tokyo, you might as well give him a shot. I went out with him the other day, with a couple of tourist gamer kids from America. He took them out for curry in Shibuya. It was really good curry, and pretty cheap. His advice: "Eat until it pushes your stomach up into your lungs. Then – we walk." The next day, he complained after exiting the bathroom, "Why do these kids always want curry?" I told him that maybe he was making them want curry. He told me something very rude. That guy's dangerous. If he picks up his guitar, get out of there.



JAP CHARTS

PS2 TOP 10 GAMES



- 01 GENSO SUIKODEN IV KONAMI
- 02 WORLD SOCCER WINNING ELEVEN 8 KONAMI
- 03 JIKKYU POWERFUL PRO BASEBALL 11 KONAMI
- 04 GUNSLINGER GIRL VOL. 3 MARVELOUS
- 05 JISSEN PACHISLOT HISHOUHOU HOKUTONOKEN SAMMY
- 06 KING OF FIGHTERS: MAXIMUM IMPACT SNK PLAYMORE
- 07 TAIKO NO TETSUJIN: 4TH GENERATION NAMCO
- 08 ONE PIECE ROUND THE LAND BANDAI
- 09 KOTOBA NO PUZZLE: MOJI PITAN NAMCO
- 10 SARU EYETOY SONY

JAP CHARTS

MOST WANTED GAMES



DRAGON QUEST VIII

Oh, Lord help us. The leaked street date of 24 November has not been denied by Square Enix. It must be real. It's really coming. Someone have mercy.



FINAL FANTASY XII

What happened to the promise to wait six months between Dragon Quest and Final Fantasy? The purportedly 150-hour game is coming rather sooner than expected.

チカラズマ

REGULAR REPORTS ABOUT HAPPENING EVENTS IN THE LAND OF THE RISING SUN FROM play™'S JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT, BT AMAZAWA



PSP TO HAVE ONLY TWENTY MINUTES OF BATTERY LIFE?!

My PSP-hating friend was ranting and raving the other day about the PSP's battery life. He does this all the time, these days. He has no Sony products in his house except a PlayStation2 that doesn't work. It doesn't work because he keeps standing it on its side without using the vertical stand. "Why should you need the vertical stand?" he screamed, when it became apparent that it wasn't going to work anymore. "The damn thing should come with a vertical stand!" I explained to him, not all people want to set their PS2 vertical. And even so, the stand merely assures that the PS2 is level. If you're going to be standing it on a futon mattress, it's not going to be level. "What's that got to do with it?" It has a lot to do with it. The DVDs are read with a laser, which is a precision instrument. The angle of the

laser is very important, and must not be thrown off even by a few small degrees. "WHATEVER!!" was his answer.

So he keeps telling me about "all these websites" that say "the PSP is only going to have twenty minutes of battery life." I have to tell him that Sony has neither confirmed nor denied this. He tells me "Whatever, they're not denying it just because they know it's true." This guy's hopeless. He doesn't see how stupid it is - why on earth would Sony make the PSP's battery life only twenty minutes? Why even make it only forty, or an hour? Sony is not green in this industry anymore; they're above making mistakes like giving gamers the opportunity to play their portable system only an hour a day.

My friend is weird for a Japanese guy, I was thinking as I ate a big bowl of cold udon noodles

alone. Japanese people are always quick to preach the positive side of things. They'd be quick to say, "Hey, it's totally stupid to assume the PSP will only last twenty minutes at a time. Think about it!" They approach ridiculous costs at restaurants with explanations like "It's expensive to live in Tokyo. Heating bills, electric bills, all that. They have to turn a profit."

Japanese people, by their nature, don't complain. That's not to say they don't dislike things that they dislike, or that they don't sometimes wish they'd gotten a better deal. It's just that they don't ever march back into a game shop and say "This game sucks." In my experience, it's only with close friends that the Japanese rant about things they hate. So I guess this guy is a good friend. That doesn't mean he's not still wrong about the PSP. ■

ダーリン・ビーバー・ネイフ・ゴトク ドラゴン・クエスト・ビッグ・ストーリー ファイナル・ファンタジー XII

STEAMBOY DOES NOT CONTAIN ANY STEAMY BOYS

Steamboy director Katsuhiro Otomo's fifteen-year-animated-feature-directorial-hiatus-breaking film, is mostly the same story as his 1989 *Akira*, which speaks grimly about the future of Tokyo following a nuclear war. The stage this time is London of 1866. This thing called 'The Steamball', which can generate perpetual steam, falls into the hands of a boy named Ray, who then has to save London from his disfigured-in-an-accident father, the famed Dr Steam. Dr Steam, played by The Colonel from *Akira* (I mean, come on! It's the same damn character design!) wants to use The Steamball, invented by his father, to power robots that will destroy the British army. There are some (really, really) nice planar animation effects (the 'camera' pans back through a submarine very early), though not a single lovable character. The film is too aimed at wholesomeness to have anyone as cool as *Akira*'s swearing protagonist Kaneda, of whom Ray is a little spitting image. Made on a budget of many billions of yen, I don't know if Steamboy is worth it.

ANOTHER STORY ABOUT ANIME — TWO IN ONE MONTH!!

This year has been big for anime. *Appleseed* marked the first-ever fully CG Japanese animated feature based on Masamune Shirow's old manga. *Innocence* was the Mamoru Oshii-directed sequel to Shirow's beloved *Ghost In The Shell*. *Steamboy* saw Katsuhiro Otomo directing a full-length film for the first time in fifteen years. Unfortunately, not a one of these films - all of which I waited for with bated breath - was any good. Now Hayao Miyazaki, director of *Spirited Away*, *Princess Mononoke*, and a dozen better films (not to say those two aren't great) is coming out of retirement for the third time to direct *Howl's Moving Castle*. The previews show a depressing, acid-burned world, and flying insects in top-hats. I am not hopeful. I will see it in November, and let you know how it is, at any rate.

日本
JAPAN

WHAT'S GOING DOWN IN THE LAND OF THE RISING SUN?

PlayStation

play™

GREATEST PLAYSTATION GAME EVER

ARE YOU READY
TO BE UTTERLY
CONVINCED THAT
THE BEAUTIFUL
GAME IS ALSO
THE GREATEST
GAME ON
PLAYSTATION?



PRO EVOLUTI

Football is, without a doubt, the greatest game on earth. Millions worship at its altar every Saturday, passing through turnstiles in their millions, and so it stands to reason that the greatest football game ever made should be a strong contender for title of the greatest videogame of all time.

The main argument for awarding *Pro Evo 3* this heady accolade is that somehow, Konami has captured the essence of football, the spirit of the game, that incredible x-factor that elevates the sport beyond all others, and put it into a videogame. This is very much a game that is more than the sum of

par sports efforts EA pumps out on a almost daily basis. Indeed, it is only fair to touch briefly on *Pro Evo*'s nemesis at this point: the *FIFA* series. The terrifying truth of the matter is that if it weren't for *Pro Evo*, every football game would be like *FIFA* – and that would be a very bad thing, because *FIFA* is someone else's interpretation of football, not a football game in its own right. If the two games were to attend a real football match, *FIFA* would turn up in smart chinos and a polo-shirt, get to the ground an hour early, tuck into a nice homogenised meal in the bland surroundings of the corporate banqueting suite before reading its program, then

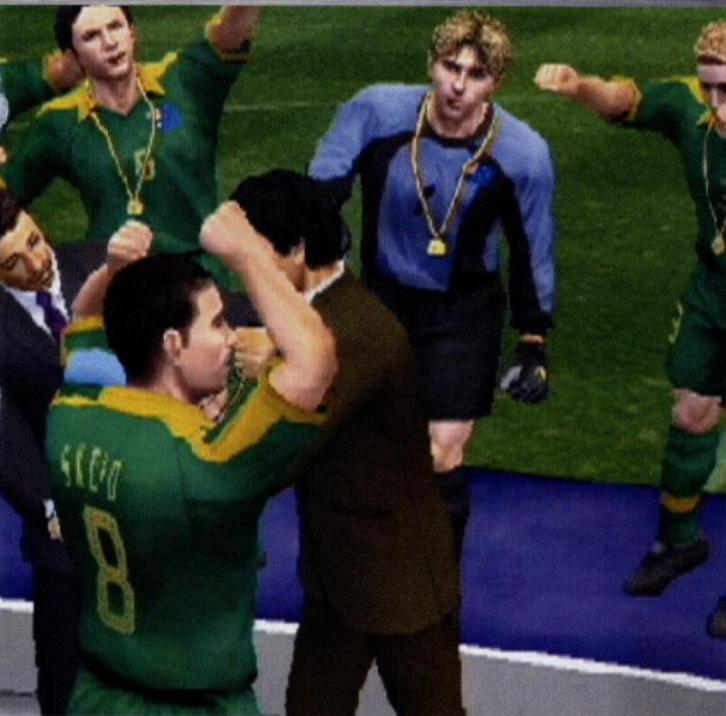
NO OTHER GAME HAS PROVOKED SUCH AN EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT

its parts – it takes the art of gaming to a higher plane. *Pro Evo 3* is the game that football fans would make, not what the marketing gurus that sadly rule the modern game would come up with.

For starters, the marketing of the game was spot on. Advertising campaigns showed a big fat burly fan, stripped to the waist, England flag proudly painted on his face, and a meat pie gobward-bound. You'll never see such honesty, such an accurate portrayal of real fans in any of the below-

wandering out to take a nice padded seat on the halfway line. The game would unfold into a thrilling extravaganza of attacking football with at least three goals coming courtesy of overhead kicks, played in true sportsman-like manner. With 88 minutes on the clock, *FIFA* would leave early to avoid the crowds, leap into the Volvo and head off home – probably stopping for a McDrive-Thru on the way back. *Pro Evo*, on the other hand, would turn up thirty seconds before kick off, piling half-drunk into

GREATEST PLAYSTATION GAME EVER



Rankings table								
RK	Team	Pt	W	D	L	GF	GA	F/A
1	Chamartin	6	2	0	0	10	1	9
2	Cataluna	6	2	0	1	8	0	9
3	Languedoc	4	1	1	0	3	2	1
4	West London White	4	1	1	0	2	1	1
5	Rhone	3	1	0	1	9	3	0
6	Ille De France	3	1	0	1	2	3	-1
7	Galicia Norte	2	0	2	0	3	3	0
8	Guadalquivir	2	0	2	0	3	3	0
9	Puerto	1	0	1	1	2	3	-1
10	Esportiva	1	0	1	1	1	2	-1
11	Manzanares	1	0	1	1	0	1	-1
12	Naranja	1	0	1	1	0	1	-1
13	Donosti	1	0	1	1	1	2	-2
14	Galicia Sur	1	0	1	1	2	9	-7

▲ PES's Master League suffers from the lack of real league licenses yet it is as addictive as crack cocaine. Fact.



▲ The best, most customisable, easy-to-use tactics in a football game ever? Yes, actually.



ON SOCCER 3

the away end. It would then be prepared to watch a hard-fought, nil-nil draw against a top of the league team on a quagmire of a pitch, call the referee names throughout the match, be last man out the ground at the end, and the first one into the nearest pub.

It's real football, for real fans – not the Johnny-come-lately wallet-followers that think Sky invented the sport and would love to see a European Super League where Manchester Utd could play Real Madrid and Juventus every week.

What Pro Evo has down to a fine art is that little x-factor. When players make a pass, tackle or a shot, there is still an element of chance involved. Burst clean through on the keeper with Henry and, while you'll fancy your chances of ripping the back of the net,

there's still a chance that you'll spoon a shot wide or tap it into the keeper's arms. In real life, does Owen score with every shot? Of course he doesn't, and just because you are controlling him, that shouldn't make him perfect. Pro Evo 3 walks a tightrope between giving players individual characteristics and qualities without ever making the player feel as though they have too little control over proceedings. Thus a great player can have an absolute stinker while even a carthorse has the potential to pull off a thirty-yard screamer into the back of the net once in his career.

Pro Evolution Soccer is close to real football in that it is all about the hope, the promise, the potential of a situation rather than the inevitability of an overhead kick flying into the back of the net. Great goals are

actually few and far between, rather than ten-a-penny as in most other football games. A free kick on the edge of the box will not always bring a goal, however much practice you put in – just like real football. Does Beckham always get them in? No, so why should you?

One of the greatest achievements of Pro Evolution 3 is in multiplayer. At Highbury Entertainment, groups of keen Pro Evo fans host 'Pro Evo Nights' on a monthly basis and these frequently go on until the small hours, with the bragging rights of winning taken very seriously indeed by all concerned. Now consider this: in a company where we have a high number of people who are paid to play videogames all day every day, there is inevitably a high proportion of hardcore gamers. However, no other game has provoked such a response, such an emotional attachment. With the advent of Xbox Live, a lot of the guys will play Rainbow Six and Project Gotham against each other online, but organising specific evenings where everyone gathers in one house, where PS2s, copies of the game and spare tellies are carted round, with money put in to provide beer, pizzas and a trophy for the winner? Only Pro Evo does that, and for that reason alone, it beats the bejesus out of any other game not only on PlayStation but, well, anything. ■



▲ Goals from corners can be a huge bone of contention – but then that's just like real footy isn't it?



▲ Games tend to be low scoring. Not 5-all 'thrillers' like FIFA tends to throw up. 13-17 Very unusual for Pro Evo.



▲ Pro Evolution 3 relies on a lot of scripting to keep the action as realistic as possible. It's subtle, though.



▲ Goals are rare, and great goals are even rarer so you feel a genuine sense of elation when you score one.



play™

GREATEST PLAYSTATION GAME EVER

IT'S GRAN TURISMO 2'S TURN TO GET THE GREATEST PLAYSTATION GAME TREATMENT. WILL IT BE?



GRAN TURI

When I talk about *Gran Turismo* 2 I am, of course, in part, talking about the entire *Gran Turismo* phenomenon. Phenomenon? That's right – any videogame that sells in excess of 25 million copies worldwide has to be considered a phenomenon. Those kind of sales put it right up there with the likes of *Mario* and *Zelda*, *Pokémon* and *The Sims*. It has become one of videogames' premier franchises. But sales alone do not make a great game – they merely hint

THIS GAME PUNISHED YOU FOR MAKING MISTAKES – TO WIN YOU HAD TO RACE TO BEST OF YOUR ABILITY ALL THE TIME

at it. *Gran Turismo*'s real greatness lies in what it did, in how it changed an industry – something that only true great games do.

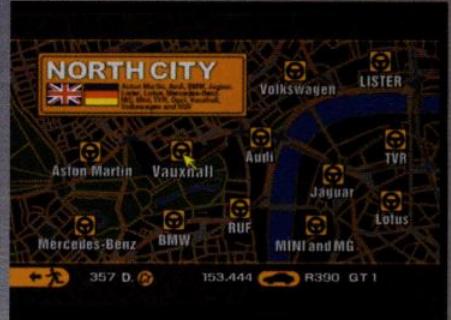
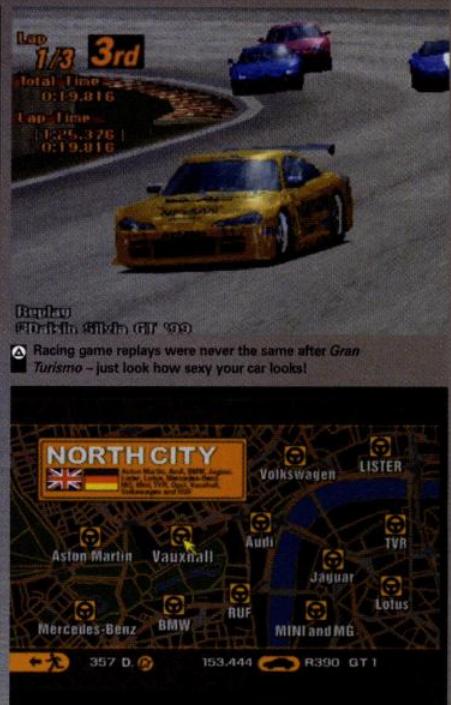
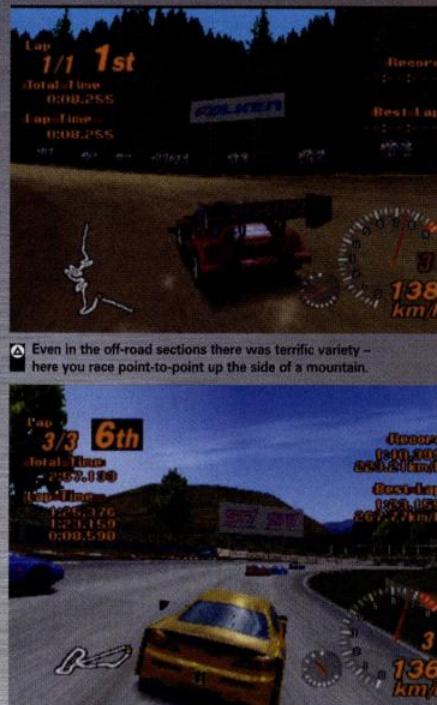
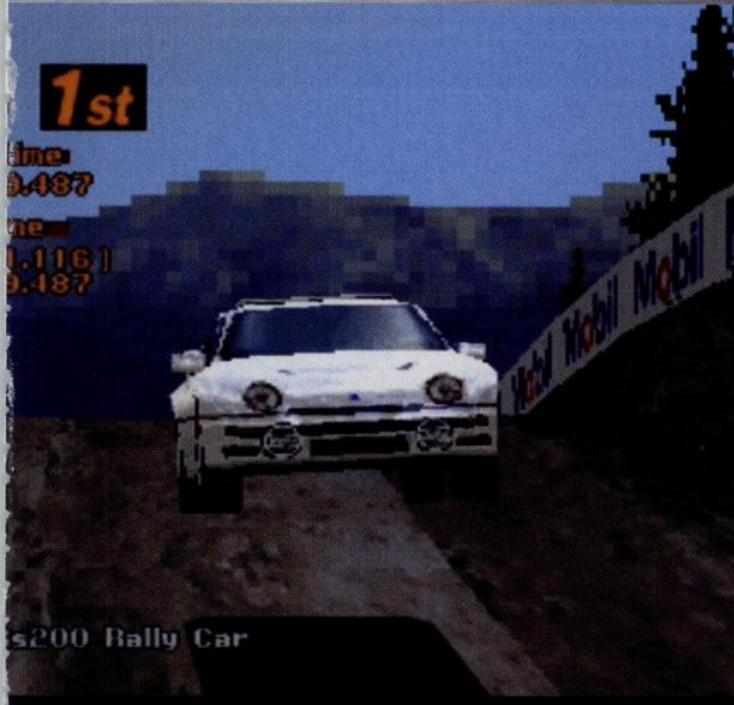
Try to remember what racing games were like before *Gran Turismo*. Sure, there were some corkers – I'm thinking *Ridge Racer*, *Sega Rally* and the like, but, and here's the crucial thing, they were almost all conversions of or based on arcade games. If you didn't want that then all you had was the boring, boring world of F1. Yawn. What *Gran*

Turismo did was clever. It was the first game that took some of those arcade ethics, ie the high production values and the sweet, sexy, SHINY graphics, married that with home console gaming and reinvented the genre. Disco.

The racing itself was innovative to say the least. How many gamers in the original GT raced off on the first course, screamed into the first corner and promptly spun off into the sand? All of them. That's because GT was the first racing game that made

braking an issue. You had to learn braking zones, sector speeds, and not to crash into walls because, hey, your car could take damage – not aesthetically, but still it could be damaged. It was a racing style that demanded the player race like a race driver would. You couldn't spin off and then expect the CPU to let you catch up with your opponents after a couple of bends. No, this game punished you for making mistakes – to win you had to race to best of your ability all the time.

GREATEST PLAYSTATION GAME EVER



SMO 2

The structure of the game was such that it has more in common with *Pokémon* than it does with, say, *Ridge Racer* and that, in part, was where *Gran Turismo* got its insanely addictive nature. You race cars, you win races and you earn prize money. You buy cars with the money and you upgrade your cars with parts purchased from the car tuners. You can then win more difficult races and win bigger prize money and you buy more expensive cars... and so on. This was, and is, an extremely addictive way of setting up the game: you are collecting, you are nurturing and evolving (ie upgrading with parts) and you are fighting (or more

specifically racing) with your cars. These are the basic principles of *Pokémon* that make it so addictive to so many kids that serve *Gran Turismo* so well. Only we're talking about highly desirable sports cars here, not stupid little pocket monsters.

But it wasn't just supercars that *Gran Turismo* gave you access to. For the first time ever (as far as I can remember) it enabled you to race family saloons in a game. And not just those but people carriers, luxury estates, classic cars and souped them up to your heart's content. As the game's creator Kazanori Yamauchi reveals in *play*'s exclusive interview this month, his original pitch for *GT* was simply, "to drive my car on my television". *Gran Turismo* starred real cars that real people could drive. You could, if you drove one of the hundreds of cars in *Gran Turismo* 2, drive your car on your television. Brilliant.

Then there's the look of the game – back in the heyday of the PSOne this was considered near photo-realistic. It was certainly the most realistic looking game ever to grace the PSOne, so much so that (as a survey by Polyphony Digital revealed) people spent as much time watching replays of their races as they did racing. Oh yes, the replay. Another ground breaking aspect of *GT*.

It's important to remember that this is *Gran Turismo* 2 I'm selling as the greatest PlayStation game of all time and not the first *GT*. That was groundbreaking but it was this second game that perfected the idea. It was where almost every major (and minor) car manufacturer in the world wanted its cars shown off in this car-porn-fetishistic manner. It was here that the game introduced tire wear and endurance races and it was here that we had racing in cities, on race tracks and, of course, rallying. And you thought I'd forgotten...

Gran Turismo 2, almost unbelievably, had an entire (and markedly different) sub-genre of racing in it, one that put every (even that *McRae* game) full-priced, standalone rally game to shame. Applying the same *GT* principles to rallying created brilliant handling and great looking cars. And you could use the rally cars on the regular tarmac races. Awesome.

So there it is. Not only was *Gran Turismo* 2 the game that perfected an idea that changed the face of racing games forever it was a great, great gaming experience in its own right. Just ask any one of those 25 million people who bought a copy. Oh hang on, you're probably one of them. In which case you'll know exactly what I'm talking about. ■



Forget *NFSU* et al, *Gran Turismo* 2 was the first game where you could buy rims for your car.

Amazingly, *Gran Turismo* 2 moved at a very decent rate – quicker even than its PS2 sequel.

Win a race, tune your car up, win more races, buy a new car, tune that up... a very addictive formula.

The test track enabled you to try out different set-ups including gear ratios and tyre types.

play™ NETWORK

A NEW MONTHLY FEATURE DEVOTED TO GETTING THE MOST OUT OF BROADBAND GAMING ON YOUR PS2

ONLINE FAQ SPECIAL

WITH CHRISTMAS APPROACHING, MANY OF YOU MIGHT BE THINKING ABOUT GETTING YOURSELVES ONLINE BUT DON'T HAVE THE CONFIDENCE TO SET UP A BROADBAND CONNECTION. IT'S OKAY, WE WON'T JUDGE YOU – INSTEAD, HERE ARE A FEW OF THOSE COMMON READER QUESTIONS ANSWERED TO HELP EASE YOU INTO THE NEW FRONTIER

Q Could you tell me what to do to put my PS2 online? My modem and PC are upstairs but my PS2 and TV are downstairs. Would a wireless option be best for me (money is no problem)? Also, would I need a modem downstairs by my PS2, or just a lot of wires? Also, please could you explain a router connection to me?

John Brooke

There are a number of wireless options available for networking your PS2. However, with both a router and wireless bridge needed to send and receive the wireless signal, it's a hefty wedge of cash to spend at once. Incidentally, you wouldn't need a second modem by the PS2, as the wireless system has a built-in router that sends the signal straight to your modem. Basically, a router links the Broadband signal to your PS2 independent of a PC, controlling the flow of information. It plugs directly between the modem and the PS2's Ethernet adaptor, and is often the most straightforward way of getting online.

Q I would like to go online with my PlayStation and I am planning to do so very soon. However I have a couple of questions I need to be assured of:

1) We have only got a \$30 per month, 256kb-a-second Broadband connection. Is this enough to use for online gaming?

2) We have one modem. Do I need another especially for my PS2, or can I connect the one I already have to my PC and my PS2?

Carlo Critero

A 150kb Broadband is about the smallest bandwidth you'll be able to take online with your PS2, but you'll probably experience lag. We'd recommend 256kb as a minimum. Additionally, as the 'ping' rate (the speed information can be sent somewhere and 'pinged' back) of a game is dictated by the slowest user, you may find many online gamers less enthused about joining in with you if your connection is too slow. Most modems sadly only enable one feed – if you want to add another you'll need a router or a network card.

Q Do I have to pay more money to play games other than my monthly broadband fees? Also, my modem is the flat-fish type and has no extra USB ports in it so do I have to buy a new modem or does the Ethernet adapter plug in to my PC's USB ports?

Stig Hicks

A Sony doesn't charge any fees, but may choose to do so in the future. Game developers may also demand fees, as has been the case with some MMORPGs. But you are currently free to play as much *Battlefront* as you wish for the price of your Broadband hook-up. If you have a network card in your PC then you should have all you need to go online, otherwise you need an Ethernet connection you can plug your PS2 Ethernet Adaptor into, and a router might be your cheapest option. However, as a USB port permits slower info flow than Ethernet, your ping rate will be affected.

+ **150KB BROADBAND IS ABOUT THE SMALLEST BANDWIDTH YOU'LL BE ABLE TO TAKE ONLINE**



Once you've paid your 40 quid you're free to play as much networked *Battlefront* as you want (though we'll be the first to admit that more than three days straight without returning to Earth just isn't good for you).



The days of needing one of these things are over – the new PS2 has the network port built-in.



Each ISP has its own benefits, but it's all a matter of preference. Shop around for the best possible option.

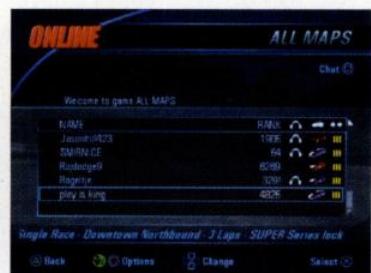
Q I want to know if you have to have a certain ISP and plan to play games online. I was thinking of connecting to Bigpond's \$30-a-month option but would it support PlayStation2? Which ISP would you advise I connect to (keeping in mind I use it for the home PC)?

Bradley Brazier

A We haven't heard of readers having trouble with any plans or ISPs in particular, beyond the normal technical hiccups and problems that occur from time to time.

Q Can you have different Broadband connections in the same home? Can you have a different Broadband connection upstairs? Do you need a special modem or can you use the one you get with the Broadband? How much, on average would it all cost? And which is the cheaper to get, Bigpond or Optus?

Jim Burns



PREVIEWS

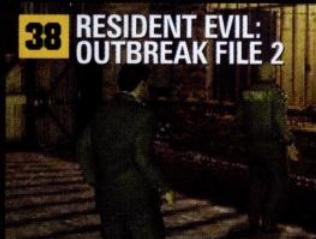
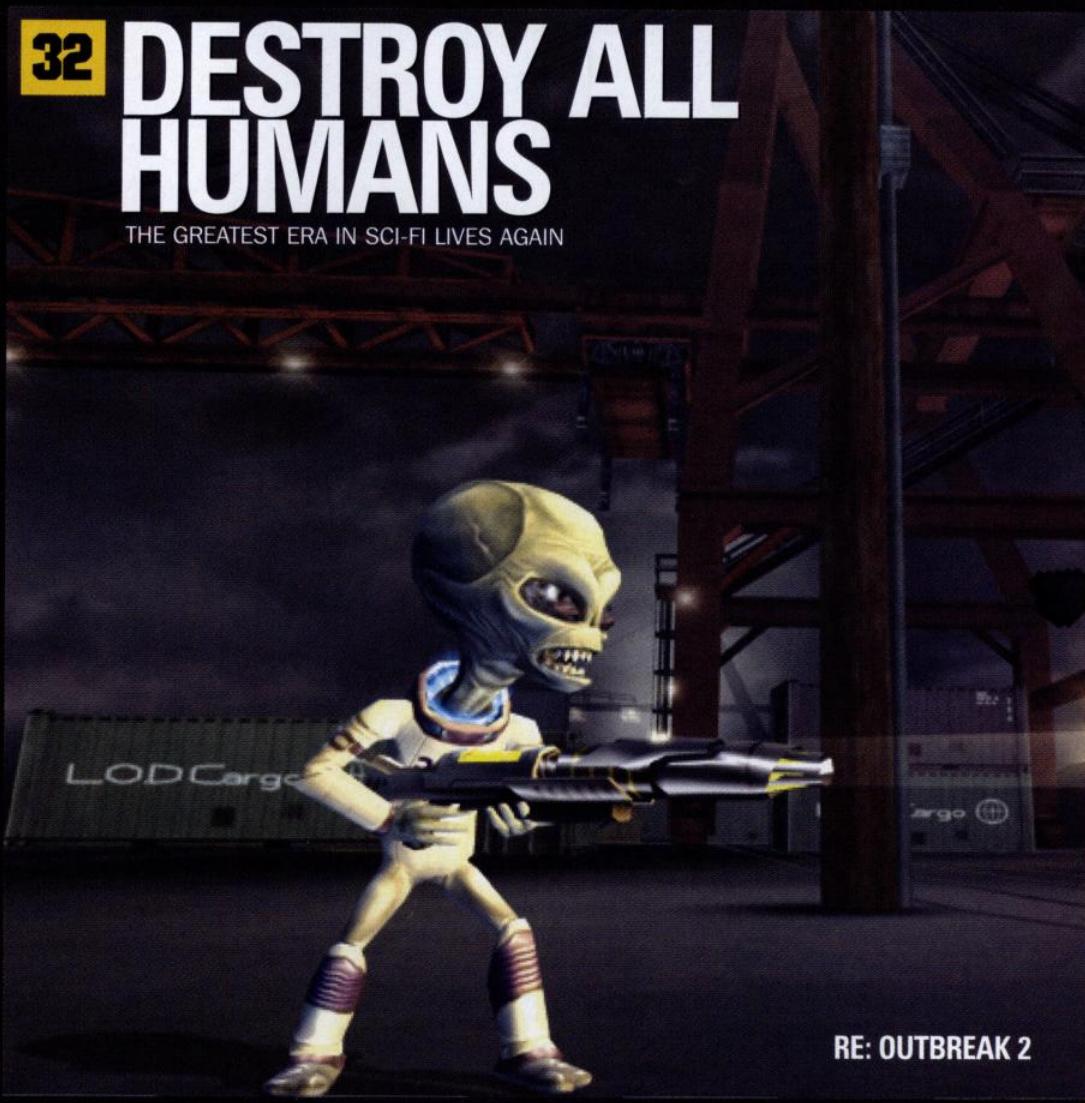
And now for a little play™ history. If you'll kindly turn to page 40, before or after you've finished reading this column (it doesn't really matter), you'll bear witness to our first ever preview of a PSP game, *Metal Gear Acid*.

This means either:

- a) we're as excited as a team of cynical old gamers can get; or
- b) the PSP will soon move from the realm of possibility into the realm of reality.

Elsewhere there's our in-house favourite, *Destroy All Humans*, mega gross-out *The Punisher* and more. We're especially excited to be bringing you some information on the game guaranteed to cause geeks the world over to wet their pants in anticipation, *Lego Star Wars*.

Sigh. Feels like time for a Bex and a lie down already.



ALPHA



ALPHA

First looks and Q&As

32 DESTROY ALL HUMANS

Prepare to die, earth scum! Or something like that.

34 AREA 51

Prepare to die, alien scum! Or something like that.

35 ALIEN HOMINID

Prepare to die... oh, you get the idea. (Or something like that.)

36 THE PUNISHER

Jeez, and we thought Manhunt was blood-curdling. Wait till you get your hands on this.

38 RESIDENT EVIL: OUTBREAK 2

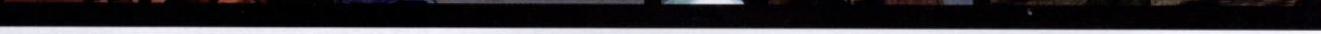
Can this game really be any good without online play?

40 METAL GEAR ACID

It's small, it's perfectly formed and it's like no Metal Gear you've ever seen before.

42 LEGO STAR WARS

Unleash your inner geek. Times two.



DESTROY ALL HUMANS!



RELEASE DATE
FEB 2005

VITAL STATISTICS

PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: Pandemic
WEB SITE:
www.destroyallhumansgame.com

GENRE

► SHOOT-'EM-UP

NO. PLAYERS
1 x 1

TAKE NOTE:

- Utilise a range of mind powers including levitation, mind reading, body snatching and hypnotisation.
- You can steal cows for research.
- Kill plenty humans with ironically-named weaponry.

ANTICIPATION



FROM THE PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT YOU...

STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS
STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT

55%
94%

QA



NAME
BRENDAN ANDREWS

POSITION
PRODUCER

Destroy All Humans looks like a lot of fun. But what exactly is the ultimate goal for the player?

Oh, you know, world domination, enslaving humanity, that sort of thing. The usual goals for your average Earth-invading alien, really. Actually, you have two major goals – the first is to find and retrieve your clone-brother, he was shot down at Roswell, and the second is taking control of humanity and preparing them for harvesting.

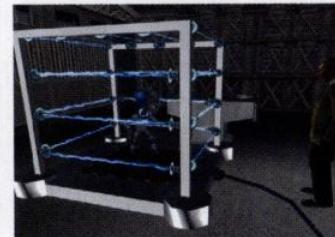
In the game you collect brain stems, but what purpose do they serve? Do the different colours have any significance?

Brain stems are a kind of currency in the game, where the colours indicate the quality. In the most simple terms you need them because some humans have strands of Furon DNA, and this is the easiest way to get access to it. You can use the stems you collect to directly boost your health or hang onto them, extract the DNA from them and trade it back on the mothership for all sorts of goodies!

UFOs – yay, or nay?
I've seen plenty, so I'd have to say 'yes'. Having been abducted three times now (in the name of research) I get the point of probing. And we've put that to good use in the game. Abduction is, of course, 99% boredom and 1% 'What the #@!&'. But trust me – once you've been staring at the night sky for eight long hours with your



It's not 'Nice jetpack' we're thinking here, it's 'Where is everybody?'



A forcefield to hold Crypto captive, or a WWE Steel Cage Match? You decide.



Even though he doesn't know what it means, Crypto resented the 'boycott' comment.



Strangely, on his home planet, Crypto is quite a 'hottie' and gets all the chicks.



This is either a shot of a matter-rearranging blast or airborne bolognese.

DESTROY ALL HUMANS!

IF WE WERE PANDEMIC WE'D HAVE TO ADD THE SUBHEADING: EXCEPT SHANNON ELIZABETH*

The phrase 'GTA-like' is one of the most abused in the videogame press, often used in connection with any game featuring an angry man with a gun in a large city. That's a definite misuse as far as we're concerned, after all it's not the 'angry man with gun in city' part that's so significant about GTA – it's the freedom of play on offer. That's why we'd feel happy describing *Spider-Man 2* as Spidey meets GTA. We also feel pretty ecstatic about describing *Destroy All Humans!* as aliens-invade-GTA-and-go-Psi-Ops. Let's see, that sums up the design ethos, the freeform gameplay and use of psionic powers in one long bout of hyphen abuse. High Five!

While lead character, a Furon called Cryptosprodium-137, won't be joyriding in cars like a certain Mr Vercetti, a larger

brain, mind powers and alien technology facilitate a somewhat more colourful experience – so instead of bludgeoning pedestrians with baseball bat and fleeing by stolen car, Crypto's afternoons might be spent hypnotising humans for nefarious means, splattering them using an arsenal including a Brain-Exploder, an Ion Detonator, a Zap-O-Matic, a Sonic Boom and a Quantum Deconstructor. And who needs a car when you've got a jetpack? The transitions to which are as seamless as any Rockstar crime sim, but smattered with liberal sci-fi references adding a whole new ethos – genetic cloning and the harvesting of brain stems is integral to both the plot and core gameplay.

As some wise monotheist once said, 'God is in the details', making Pandemic

the ancient Chinese hero Kuanyu – the god of accountancy. Use Cryptosprodium-137's telekinesis on a victim and he or she will exclaim – 'Klaatu barada nikto', a nice piece of gobbledegook straight out of *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. We like stuff like that. Extra Brownie points for Pandemic.

Where Vercetti had The Fuzz to fear, Crypto has the intergalactic version – the mysterious G-Men, the henchmen of the shadowy Majestic, run by the even shadowy Silhouette. Majestic has influence reaching into the upper echelons of world government and is wise to Furon movements. But of greater significance, the G-Men also exhibit a level of immunity to Crypto's powers, which brings up the nagging question – are they human or aren't they? Dun-dun-duunnn!

Before an extended hands-on we'll keep the enthusiasm reignited. After all, *Spider-Man 2*, despite the recreation of a GTA-esque city, couldn't offer enough variety of sub-missions to make it a true classic. However, so far the little bits of GTA, Psi-Ops and alien kitsch we've seen point towards a game with a lot of potential. ■

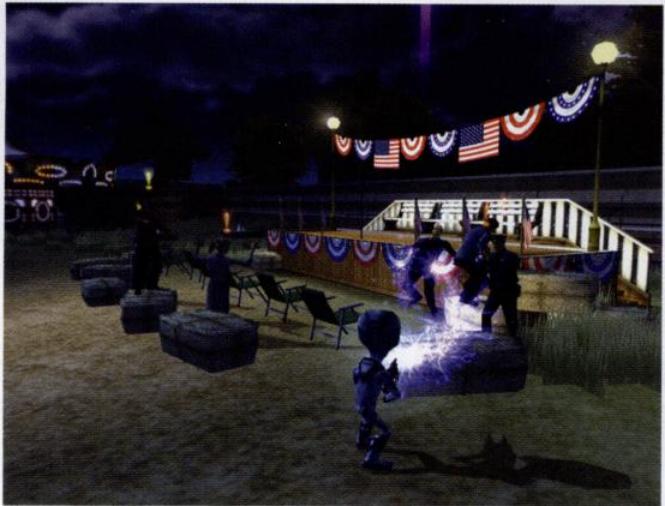
*and Monica Bellucci, Scarlett Johansson, Mrs Maidens, Michael's wife and kids, Kim's mum...

WHAT WE SAY »

WHILE LEAD CHARACTER, A FURON CALLED CRYPTOSPRODUM-137, WON'T BE JOYRIDING IN CARS, MIND POWERS AND ALIEN TECHNOLOGY FACILITATE A MORE COLOURFUL EXPERIENCE

"Use destructive weapons and innate mental powers to take on the most feared enemy in the galaxy – mankind!"
THQ Press Release

» WHAT THEY SAY



Here's Crypto, he's cool and all, but if he touched a single hair on Monica Bellucci's head, he'd be for it.



▲ Oooh, an Ed Wood reference. That's Ed Wood though, rather than *Ed Wood*.



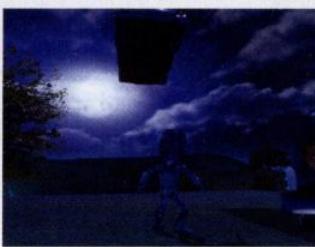
WE FEEL PRETTY ECSTATIC ABOUT DESCRIBING DESTROY ALL HUMANS! AS ALIENS-INADE-GTA-AND-GO-PSI-OPS



▲ Why is outer space a bad place to hold a party? Because there's no atmosphere.



▲ Before killing the man, Crypto quipped "Xoihsvnksbalcnrukzmdff". Funny guy.



▲ Where that car's going it doesn't need roads. See, we can do references too.



▲ Which is more fabulous? Infiltration, disintegration or this big purple explosion?

eyes pinned open, even a probing will do to stop the boredom.

Crypto has a UFO as well, the player gets to see the world from that perspective – not to mention the weapons – which I think I should mention. From the UFO you have firstly the Abduct Beam, a cyclonic tractor beam that produces a funnel of energy beneath the UFO. It draws anything that is not nailed down into its twisting vortex. Then there's the Sonic Boom, a low frequency soundwave cannon which pulverizes and shatters targets – particularly effective against buildings and other structures. Of course, you also have the standard Death Ray. A red beam of superheated plasma burns through almost any substance in seconds. Then there is the Quantum Deconstructor – a concentrated mass of dark matter particles fired as a fast moving projectile. A green ball of energy is released forming a rapidly expanding sphere seething with eddies of high energy particles. It doesn't really leave much stuff behind...

Which is more fabulous – infiltration or disintegration?

Well that's about personal preference isn't it? On one hand there's immense satisfaction in blowing things up. If weapons weren't so cool there would probably be fewer wars, so, of course, games are definitely a preferable platform. Infiltration is something else though – there's a real sense of adventure and freedom in being where you're not supposed to be and deceiving the humans in the game. This is what I prefer, but, of course, your mileage may vary.

There's a strong sense of satire of science fiction in the game. Are there any sources that are too sacralised, or is anything fair game?

Nothing is too sacred, no! If we can think of a way of parodying it we almost certainly will.



AREA 51

VITAL STATISTICS

PUBLISHER: Midway
DEVELOPER: In-house
WEB SITE: www.midway.com

GENRE
FIRST-PERSON
SHOOTER

NO. PLAYERS
1-16 (ONLINE)

TAKE NOTE:

- Music from former Nine Inch Nails man Chris Vrenna.
- Voice talent from Marilyn Manson and David Duchovny.
- OMG! Killzone-beater! OMG!

ANTICIPATION



FROM THE PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT YOU...

PSI-OPS
NBA BALLERS

91%
82%

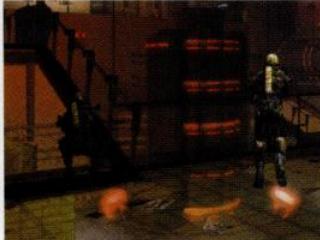
RELEASE DATE
TBA 2005



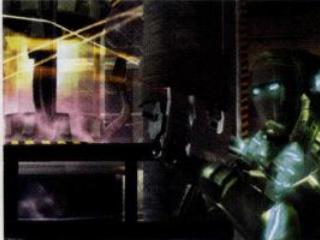
And you're Mr Pink. "Why am I Mr Pink?" "Because you're pink, that's why."



Wow, these spiders are robotic and alien – Midway's creativity truly knows no bounds.



Apparently, most of Area 51's government-funding goes on floor polish.



Judging by the glow-in-the-dark outfit, this guy won't be involved in stealth missions.

AREA 51

Marilyn Manson isn't the only musical superstar involved with the making of Area 51 – Chris Vrenna, one of the founding members of Nine Inch Nails – a group many gamers will be familiar with, is composing the musical score. If Vrenna's past output is in anyway indicative of Area 51's musical direction, it's likely to sound as industrial as the interiors of Area 51 look in these shots.



Is that Killzone smeared on the walkway, or is it the hopes and dreams of a million or so gamers?



A weapons testing facility. Excellent. It enables us to waste badguys and quip 'test this!'



The alien made the mistake of thinking this museum piece had the power to take over the world.

AREA 51

LENGTH 7.14 X WIDTH 7.14 = AREA 51*

While 'everyone else' (sweeping generalisation warning) has been quick to hype Area 51 as a Killzone-beater on the strength of information amounting to rocking horse poo, **PLAY** is never rushed when it comes to pouring on praise. We're still no closer to finding out if licking Area 51's DVD will taste like Ambrosia, but we do have enough new screenshots and info to bring you a tasty little Alpha.

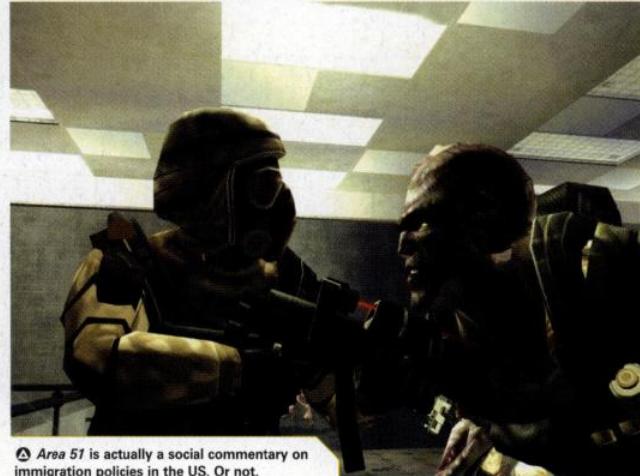
We've already commented on the promising scenarios that emerge as

Special Forces Agent Ethan Cole helps NPC characters fend off an alien invasion deep inside Area 51. Now we can reveal that gothstar Marilyn Manson is behind it all. Sort of. In actual fact he's just one of the confirmed celebrities lending vocal chords to the game's characters – *X-Files*' David Duchovny will play Ethan, Powers Boothe from *Deadwood* will be Major Bridges, while goth-rocker Mr Manson will voice an alien called Edgar. Whether you'll hear him caterwauling too is, as yet, unconfirmed.

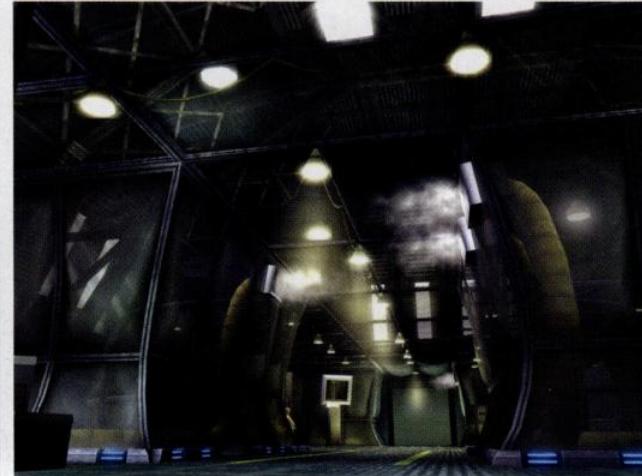
IT'LL BE INTERESTING TO SEE IF AREA 51 WILL BE ABLE TO BEAT ITS OWN HYPE, LET ALONE KILLZONE'S

Stan Winston Studios, is heading up the design of the game's various extraterrestrials. But on top of the yellow-eyed dudes and typical Grey xenomorph strains we've yet to see evidence that its input will match its famous *Alien* and *Predator* designs. Still, it'll be interesting to see if Area 51 will be able to beat its own hype, let alone *Killzone*. ■

*Before all you mathematical geniuses write in telling us we got the equation wrong, we do realise that the square root of 51 is in fact 7.14142842854285. We rounded it off to two decimal places for space considerations.



Area 51 is actually a social commentary on immigration policies in the US. Or not.



ALIEN HOMINID

VITAL STATISTICS

PUBLISHER:
O-3 Entertainment Inc.
DEVELOPER:
The Behemoth
WEB SITE:
www.alienhominid.com

GENRE

» SHOOT-'EM-UP

NO. PLAYERS
» 1-4

TAKE NOTE:

- Old-school, hand-drawn, 2D graphics. Sweeeeeet!
- Started life as a free-to-download web game.
- Inspired by *Metal Slug* and *Gunstar Heroes*.

ANTICIPATION



FROM THE PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT YOU...

ALIEN HOMINID – THE FLASH GAME
SOME RATHER NATTY SKATEBOARDS

NR%
NR%

RELEASE DATE

TBA



Two small yellow dudes take on a towering FBI robot. Writing that sentence makes us happy.

Behold the greatest hand-animated explosions to ever grace a television screen.

If you look carefully, you'll see Hominid #2 wears a baseball cap. Handy that.

Cartoons – helping violence infiltrate the minds of children since 1937.

FROM SMALL ACORNS...

Alien Hominid started life as a prototype PC game distributed by the likes of www.newgrounds.com.

Some six million downloads later, The Behemoth realised that its little chappy possessed the kind of raw charisma, not to mention addictive gameplay, to warrant a more mainstream release. Naturally, the artwork has been redone, new levels introduced and all manner of boss and mid-boss action thrown in for good measure, as well as a quite special four-player Party mode. All this from a small team of veteran coders and old-school hardcore gamers.

We'd buy them a pint each if they didn't all live in San Diego.



The close-range knife move is heavily reminiscent of *Metal Slug*. If you're going to emulate a game you might as well make it a great one.

ALIEN HOMINID

I'M AN ALIEN, I'M A LEGAL ALIEN

Look at that little yellow fellow. Don't you just want a model of him (um, it) on your desk? If the answer is 'hell yeah!' then head on over to www.alienhominid.com and buy one already. You'll be helping to keep developer The Behemoth afloat, so it can keep on pumping out games like *Alien Hominid*. An honourable endeavour. As you can see, the game is more colourful

than one of Adella Cosplay's costumes and looks to have been the byproduct of a pad of paper and a pack of crayons rather than a stuffy design manifesto. Right on. Free the weed.

Alien Hominid #1 and #2 have crashed landed on earth and must hop around and shoot nefarious earthlings and a whole lot more besides in the finest 2D-platform-shooter style. Think *Metal Slug*

on fast-forward or *Gunstar Heroes* – Treasure's Mega Drive classic – right down to the hand drawn visuals, melee attacks, controllable vehicles and improbable arsenal of weapons that feel fresher than leaping through a thundering waterfall on an arid day. Only the current lack of a PAL release stands between us and the opportunity to lay the phrase 'they don't make them like they used to' to rest. ■



To think, all this magic will soon be ours and it's all thanks to six million people with good taste.



There's a lot to be said for the veteran coders out there then – especially when they're making stuff as fresh as this.



THE PUNISHER

VITAL STATISTICS

PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: Volition
WEB SITE:
www.thq.com/punisher/game

GENRE
SHOOT-EM-UP

NO. PLAYERS
» 1x1

TAKE NOTE:

- Not quite as violent as *The Passion Of The Christ*.
- Written by comic legends Garth Ennis and Jimmy Palmiotti.
- It's an excuse for when Will finally goes postal.

ANTICIPATION



FROM THE PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT YOU...

RED FACTION
SUMMONER 2

94%
83%

RELEASE DATE
FEB 2005

NO MR CRIM, WE EXPECT YOU TO DIE

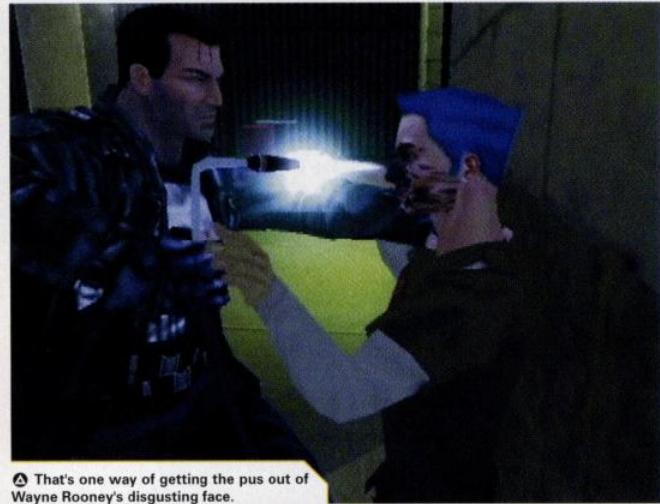
Interrogate criminals and you'll get some information, and some health back. Hey, it's a game. Take a criminal to a Punisher Point and you can really rough them up in a variety of innovative ways. One has a rack of kitchen knives being shaken over their heads until they start to fall and eventually voodoo-doll their heads. In another you can caress their face with an acetylene torch and the help of an analog stick. These sections of the game could well be deemed as glorifying torture because, hell, that's pretty much what they do. And yes, when you kill many men a bar is built up that can be spent during a psycho mode where Frank goes totally nuts. But you probably guessed he would anyway.



Nope, not yet. Ready for it? Not yet. One second. Okay, here we go. ARGHHHH!



Nothing like the old 'leaky' chair to punish the old petit-theft culprit.



That's one way of getting the pus out of Wayne Rooney's disgusting face.



You wouldn't believe the stupid gaming peripherals we have to review.



Ouch! Ouch! Ouch! Ouch! Ouch! Ouch! Ouch! Ouch! Ouch!



Big men in tight jeans have never been mistaken for homosexuals.



Crap joke: hey kid! Don't lose your head! A-hai Hahahaha!

THE PUNISHER

HOLDING OUT FOR A PSYCHO UNTIL THE MORNING LI-IGHT

Superman will get your cat out of a tree. Spider-Man will thwip the moggy down with a web. The Punisher will find out who let that cat get up there in the first place, catch them, beat them up a bit and then throw them into the polar bear enclosure at the local zoo where their arms will get ripped off by

character who fights for good and then moans about it. If Peter Parker had been a Vietnam War veteran, he might have seen the death of Uncle Ben in a different light. Frank Castle (The Punisher's alter ego) has been to Nam. He's one of the toughest soldiers ever to fall out of Fort Bragg, and so when he

This is the game. It's a non-stop tour of duty of unfathomably grotesque punishment killings. Our Frank loves a bit of the old ultra-violence and it is this love that punctuates a game that would otherwise be your usual man-with-gun shoot out. Your vast array of automatic weapons, blades, rockets et al will remove heads, arms and legs or render a body to pulp. Villains can be grabbed and used as human shields, or simply executed with a shot to the head. And, hey kids over 18, if you see a criminal with a Punisher skull above them, you can interrogate them to death or... psychotic kids over 18, you can drag them to a 'Punisher Point' and use the environment as a fulcrum for your bloody retribution. And by that we mean you should check out that boxout yonder where we really do get too excited over the prospect of pushing a grown man's head into a knife grinder. Oh, now look who's talking. ■

+ HE'S OUT TO GIVE A MAI LAI MASSACRE TO ALL CRIMINALS, SO DON'T EXPECT TO BE ESCORTING ANY PERPS TO JAIL

+ a white beast that mistakes them for a particularly anxious sea lion. Then he'll suggest that you just get a ladder. He's more a one-man Brazilian death squad than your usual lycra-clad super spod and the very epitome of the antihero. There are no cats to save, just a 'Max Payne' of criminals to be butchered.

The Punisher has always been a savoury antidote to the usual Marvel

gets his own call to vigilantism (by witnessing his entire family wiped out by the mafia in Central Park) he's not too worried about state justice. He's out to give a Mai Lai massacre to all criminals, so don't expect any missions where you escort perps to jail, only for them to break out six hours later. They are all going to hell, sometimes limb by limb, and always screaming.

WHAT WE SAY »

THE PUNISHER HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN ANTIDOTE TO THE USUAL MARVEL CHARACTER WHO FIGHTS FOR GOOD AND THEN MOANS ABOUT IT

"The Punisher is one of Marvel's grittiest heroes delivering a unique brand of vigilante justice."

Germaine Gioia, Vice President of Licensing, THQ.

» WHAT THEY SAY



NAME

JAMES TSAI

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER VOLITION

Can we expect any of the elements from either of *The Punisher* films to make their way into the Volition's game?

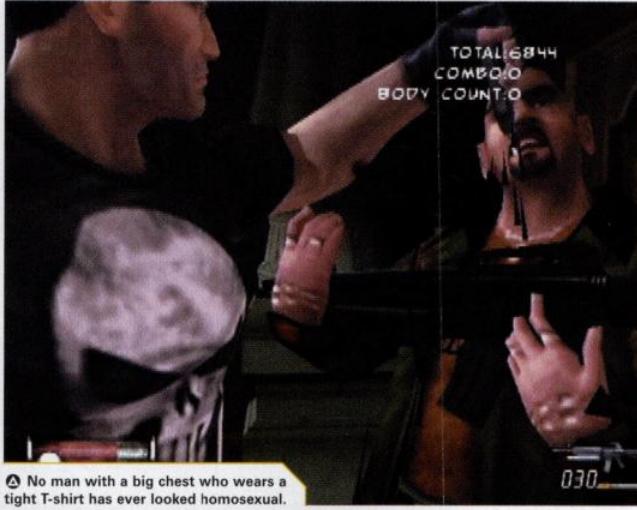
The project is definitely a comic book-inspired game - the feel of the action, the locale, and the story are all heavily inspired from Marvel's past work on the printed page. But we will definitely be incorporating movie elements where it makes sense and where it enhances what's going on in our presentation. The Punisher's costume, for instance, trenchcoat and all, were heavily inspired by the new movie, and his apartment is an extremely faithful recreation of the one from the big screen. A big goal of ours is to maintain the integrity of *The Punisher* that fans of the comics have known for years while opening up the brand and making it accessible to the newer fans that were drawn in by the film. We definitely won't be featuring Dolph Lundgren anywhere in the game.

Are there going to be any guest appearances from any of the other Marvel superheroes, say Spider-Man or even Daredevil?

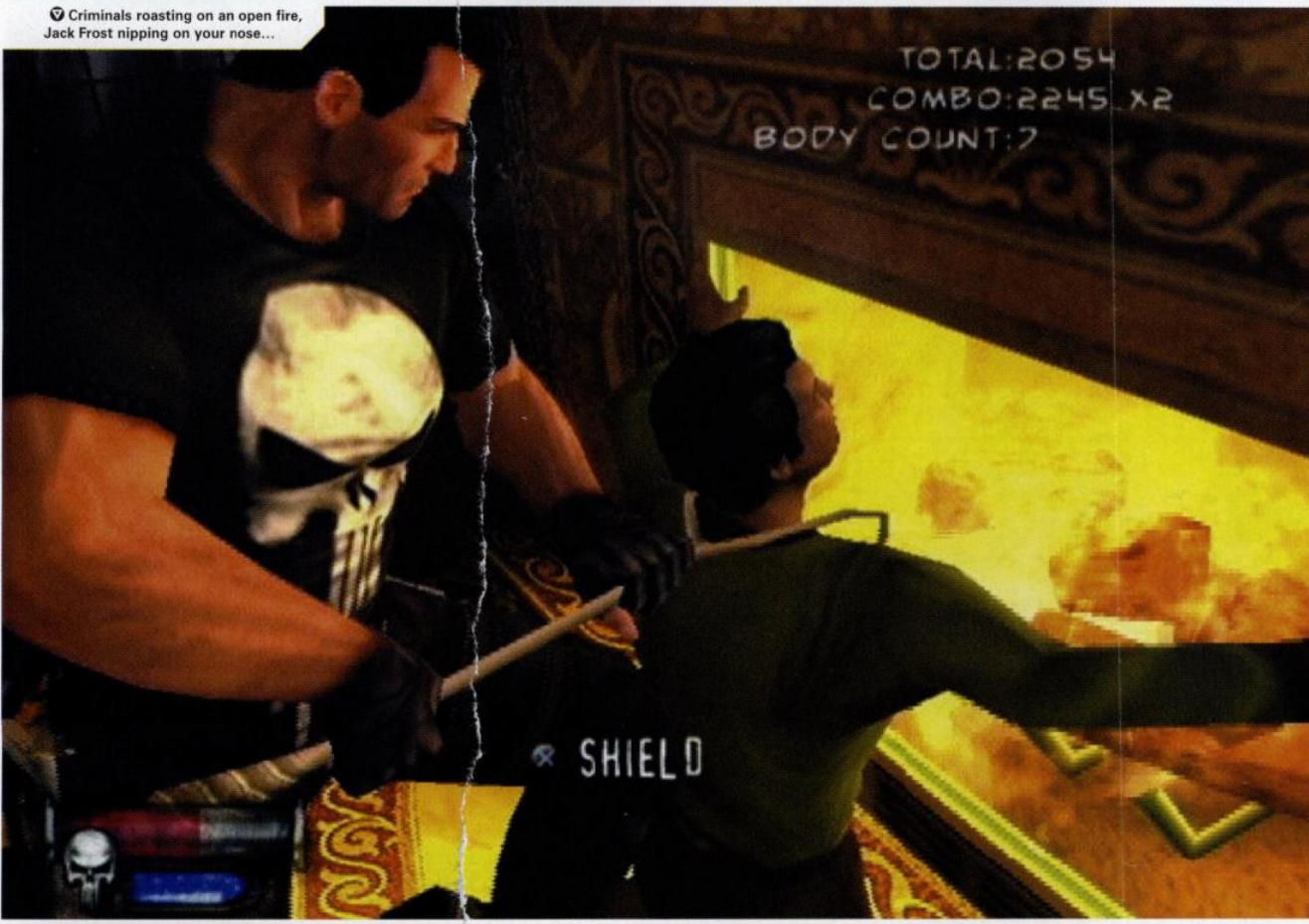
We've talked a lot with Marvel about featuring other characters in the game and they've been really helpful in giving us access to a lot of the more colourful personalities comic fans know and love. There will definitely be some recognizable characters in the game that may be featured in interactive roles or cameos - and other higher-profile characters that I really can't disclose at this time.



▀ Criminals roasting on an open fire, Jack Frost nipping on your nose...



▀ No man with a big chest who wears a tight T-shirt has ever looked homosexual.



▀ Bullets will go through human shields in the real world.



▀ That's right - it's a man having his nuts repeatedly crushed by a sliding door.



▀ Tracheotomy - the coolest medical procedure for someone who doesn't need one.



▀ In case you didn't know, he's called The Punisher because he punishes people.



RESIDENT EVIL: OUTBREAK FILE NO. 2

VITAL STATISTICS

PUBLISHER: Capcom
DEVELOPER: In-house
WEB SITE:
www.capcom-europe.com

GENRE

**ACTION
ADVENTURE**

NO. PLAYERS
1-4

TAKE NOTE:

Features a decent Tom Cruise look-a-like.
Also features a Ving Rhames look-a-like.
And a few zombie crocodiles and elephants.

ANTICIPATION



FROM THE PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT YOU...

ONIMUSHIA 3 88%
RESIDENT EVIL: CODE VERONICA 92%

RELEASE DATE
TBA



▲ Zombies or not, elephants will always remind us of *The Jungle Book*...



▲ By the ranks or single file, over every jungle mile. Oh we stamp and crush...



▲ ...through the underbrush, in a military style! In a military style!

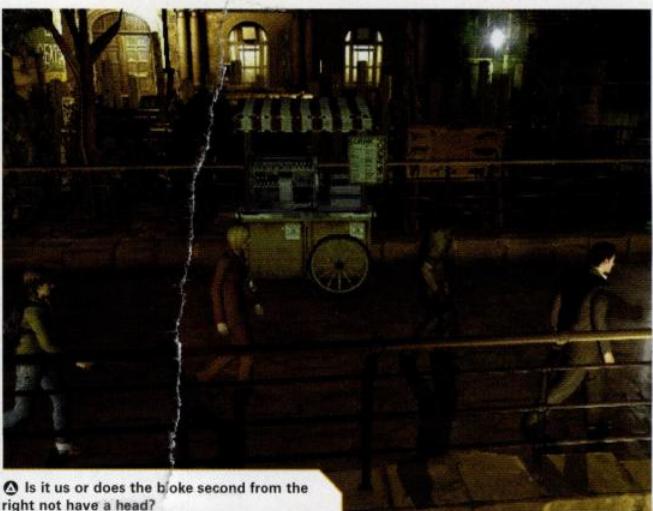
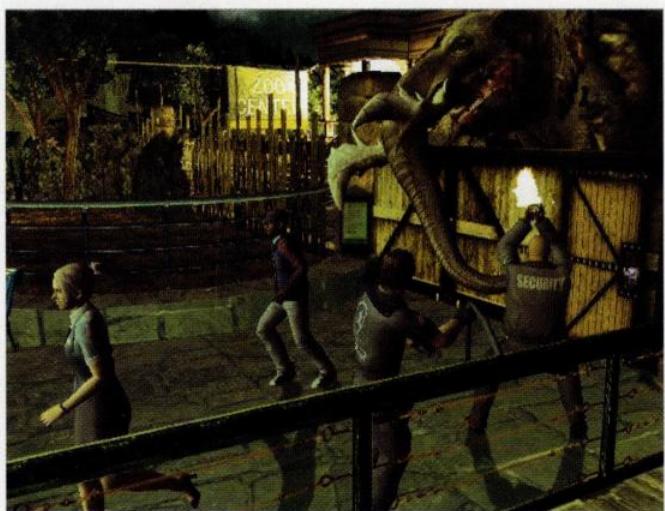


▲ Amazingly the citizens of Raccoon City paid money to look at an empty cage.

WEAPON OF CHOICE

Give it up for videogame makers giving gamers things they never knew they wanted - 'Yeah Woo Yeah. OH MY GOD!'

Resident Evil: Outbreak File No. 2 makes a point of tracking and recording your behaviour including play time, types of weapons used and distance you've walked in the game, which'll no doubt be handy for keeping tabs on how long you're spending online and handing to psychologists for a psych profile. Just what does it tell you about yourself if you discover you have a predilection for shotguns as opposed to other weapons? Think about it.



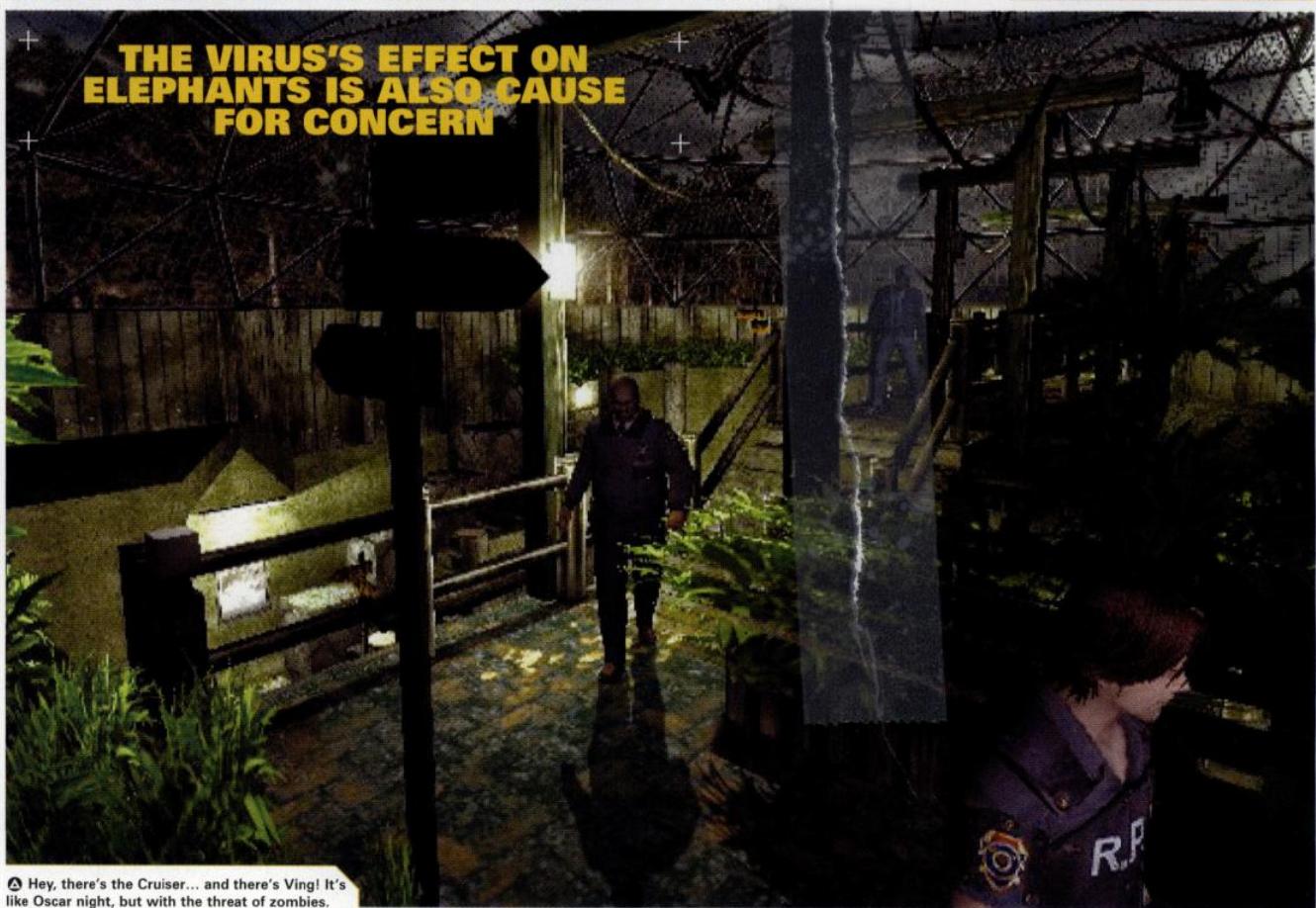
▲ Is it us or does the bloke second from the right not have a head?

THE VIRUS'S EFFECT ON ELEPHANTS IS ALSO CAUSE FOR CONCERN

Using planks of wood against zombies isn't as good as using a gun. Or a nuke.

You'll be helpless to fend off zombie-gators, as you'll need your arms to play the game.

Pump-actions. They'll sort you out. You can also pretend to be Arnie, which is cool.



▲ Hey, there's the Cruiser... and there's Ving! It's like Oscar night, but with the threat of zombies.

WHAT WE SAY »

WHILE A SINGLE-PLAYER GAME WILL ONCE AGAIN BE INCLUDED, IT'S THE FOUR PLAYER ONLINE MODE'S TARDY ARRIVAL THAT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO INDUCE ZOMBIE-LIKE SLATHERING

"Resident Evil: Outbreak File No. 2 continues the dramatic story of an outbreak caused by a secret biological weapon infecting Raccoon City." Capcom, Press Release

» WHAT THEY SAY



▲ Thanks to Capcom we hadn't seen a zoo of the undead since *Onimusha 3*.



▲ Unless zombies are afraid of bad fashion, there's no explaining this.



▲ If MacGyver were here, he'd save the day with those girder things.



▲ If Michael Knight were here, he'd save the day by being really cool.

RESIDENT EVIL: OUTBREAK FILE NO. 2

ONE OUTBREAK IS UNLUCKY, TWO IS JUST PLAIN CARELESS

We can only hope that this is a sign of better things to come. We were getting tired of looking at GameCube owners and *Resident Evil 4* with envy, but now it has been announced for the PlayStation 2 and we can look forward to what looks like a fantastic new offline Resi game. Which just serves to heighten our hopes that *Outbreak File No. 2* will be playable online in Australia.

Once again *Outbreak* takes the human angle, following the fates of eight average Joes caught up in Zombie-creating-virus-infected Raccoon City. While a single-player game will once again be included, it's the four player Online mode's tardy arrival that has the potential to induce zombie-like slathering.

The good news is that the entire cast of characters from the original game have survived for the sequel, which means that

they aren't quite as inept at zombie killing as we'd initially feared. While we're hoping the limited AI they displayed in the original's offline mode has been given a dramatic overhaul to ensure that anyone without a broadband connection can enjoy the game, naturally it's the opportunity to explore Raccoon City with three sentient beings online that we're most looking forward to.

New locations mean new enemies – Raccoon City zoo is certainly one place we wouldn't choose for a sightseeing tour post virus outbreak with its animal inhabitants just as susceptible to the germ's strains as humans – while zombies might shuffle, zombified crocodiles (or are they alligators?) are a different matter – yet lo and behold it's necessary to wade through their enclosure. Thoroughly stupid behaviour perhaps, but guaranteed to provide a good dose of tension to anyone

treading water. The virus's effect on elephants is also cause for concern – they might usually be herbivores, but now it seems they're willing to make an exception. Nice tusks too.

It's as yet unknown whether or not *Outbreak 2* will utilise any form of headset communication. On one front, having the Tom Cruise or Ving Rhames-alikes talking with the castrato of a small boy would ruin the atmosphere somewhat, though of course voice filters can do wonders these days. One very welcome addition, however, is the option to ditch the rotate-a-thon *Resident Evil* control method for fully analog directional control a la *Onimusha 3*, which means that though *Resident Evil: Outbreak 2* might be the final death knell for this antiquated control system, it'll hopefully mark the delayed birth of online survival horror for PAL users. ■

CRUISE CONTROL

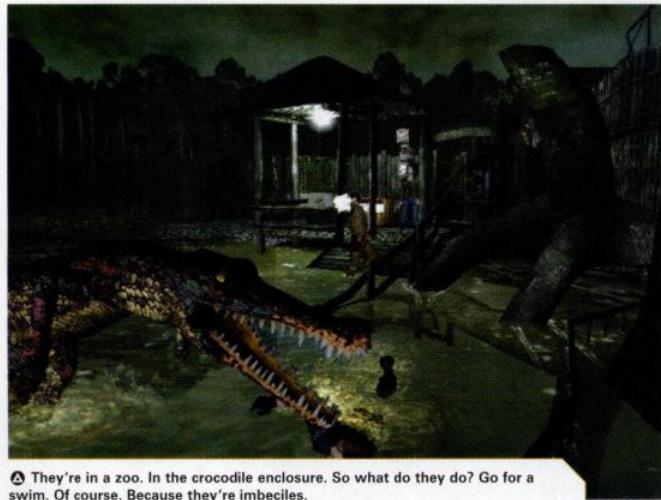
So you go online with *Outbreak 2* only to discover that someone else has already opted to play as Tom Cruise look-alike Kevin Ryman. What do you do? After all, when it comes to everyday Joes, being a cop at least gives him access to .45 Automatic, which, we can hazard a guess, is better at dispatching zombies with than a plank of wood. So what if he failed to get into S.T.A.R.S? Who else is there? Ving Rhames-alike Mark? Get out of here – we are not playing as a walking paunch.



Even when surrounded by reanimated rotting animals, Tom Cruise still finds time to romance a lady.



Even when surrounded by reanimated rotting animals, we still find time to stare at women's legs.



▲ They're in a zoo. In the crocodile enclosure. So what do they do? Go for a swim. Because they're imbeciles.



METAL GEAR ACID

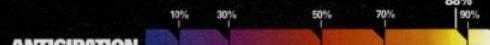
VITAL STATISTICS

PUBLISHER: Konami
DEVELOPER: In-house
WEB SITE: www.konamijpn.com

GENRE

» STRATEGY

1-PLAYER
x 1-TBA



TAKE NOTE:

- The very first *Metal Gear* game on PlayStation Portable.
- It's more like a card game than a stealth-'em-up though.
- A card game – in widescreen!

FROM THE PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT YOU...

METAL GEAR SOLID → 97%
 METAL GEAR SOLID 2 → 81%



RELEASE DATE
MARCH 2005



▲ We're currently planning pointless train journeys just so we can play this one.

ORDER OF PLAY

You move Snake across a level as if he were in a board game, he uses five different types of cards to deal with situations. That's pretty much the game. The cards come in five categories: Action, Item, Support, Weapon and Character. These cards will be used to enable you to hide in cardboard boxes, open fire with your Soocom or call in close air support.



This looks like a character card to us. Either that or it's just a face.



Choosing the wrong card will inevitably be the wrong choice. Remember that.

METAL GEAR ACID

KONAMI DEALS ONE FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE DECK

When we have decided to create a *Metal Gear* game for the PSP, we thought of the following: it should be a game that works best as a game for a portable system. Additionally, it should be a new game for the new system." – a quote from the Konami website.

What this means for us, dear readers, is that *Metal Gear Acid* is not like any previous *Metal Gear* game – it has been

between a tactics and a card-battling system than the sort of sneak-a-thon we've come to expect from Snake and his *Metal Gear* woes. To quote Konami yet again (because direct Japanese translations are amusing), "While methods of expression differ, this still is *Metal Gear*."

There is a story: The year is 2016, the setting is the United States of America. Unknown assailants hijack Jumbo jet number 326 that's flying at 35,000 feet.

to say that this Pythagoras is another *Metal Gear*. At the time of going to press we can't confirm this wild conjecture, but check these actual facts: Pythagoras is being developed on Lobito Island of the Tejan Republic of Southern Africa. This facility is heavily defended and the Tejanian government refuse to cooperate. The US Government, being a bunch of trigger-happy goons, decide to send in special forces to find out what this Pythagoras thingamajig is. Communication with the facility is lost as attackers and defenders engage in battle and so there is only one thing to do – send in the Snake for another sneaky *Metal Gear* mission, right? It has to be.

Or it could be a Greek mathematician famed for his understanding of triangles. We don't know. Yet.

The PlayStation Portable needs an addictive short-blasting strategy title and Konami seems to know this all too well. It's looking tasty. Real tasty. ■

THE PSP NEEDS AN ADDICTIVE STRATEGY TITLE AND KONAMI SEEKS TO KNOW THIS ALL TOO WELL

+ designed to work fluidly with the PlayStation Portable.

The name 'Acid' is meant to show that the game is a reworking of existing ideas. Y'know, like acid jazz and acid house. Damned clever that. The game won't play like any *MGS* game you've encountered. That's because it is more of a cross

These terrorist types have used Vecuronium Bromide gas to knock out the muscles of all onboard, including a man who could potentially be the next president of the USA – Senator Hatch. The Tangos don't want Hatch, their only demand is for the handing over of Codename: Pythagoras. We're not going



▲ Snake forgot the rules to 'Go Johnny Go, Go, Go' and felt a proper Charlie.



▲ Snake gets his cards ready to give this punk a right decking!



▲ Snake found the choices for his next move rather limiting.



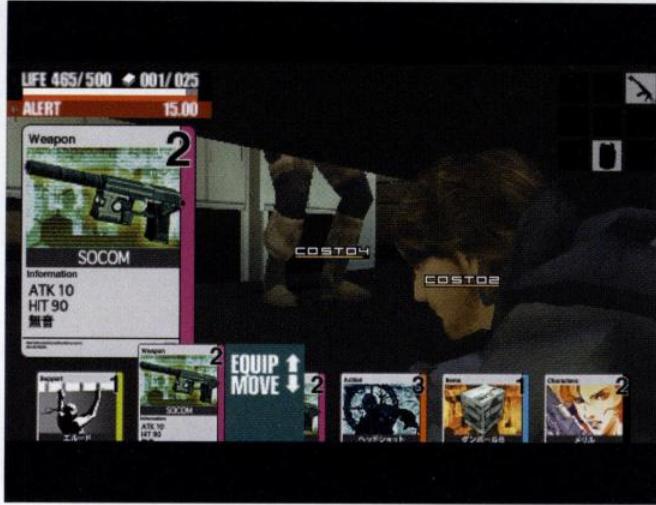
▲ Our old friend, the annoying camera-thingsy is back. We're not happy.

WHAT WE SAY »

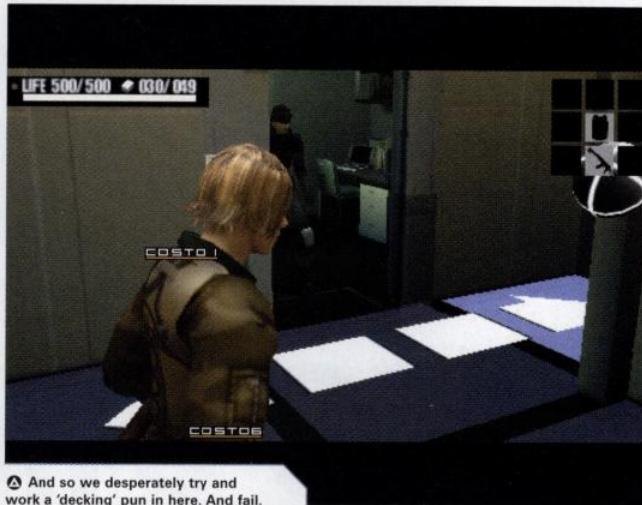
MORE OF A CROSS BETWEEN A TACTICS AND A CARD-BATTING SYSTEM THAN THE SORT OF SNEAK-A-THON WE'VE COME TO EXPECT

"The player's mission is that of infiltration. Original characters appear in a grand, original story." Konami.co.jp

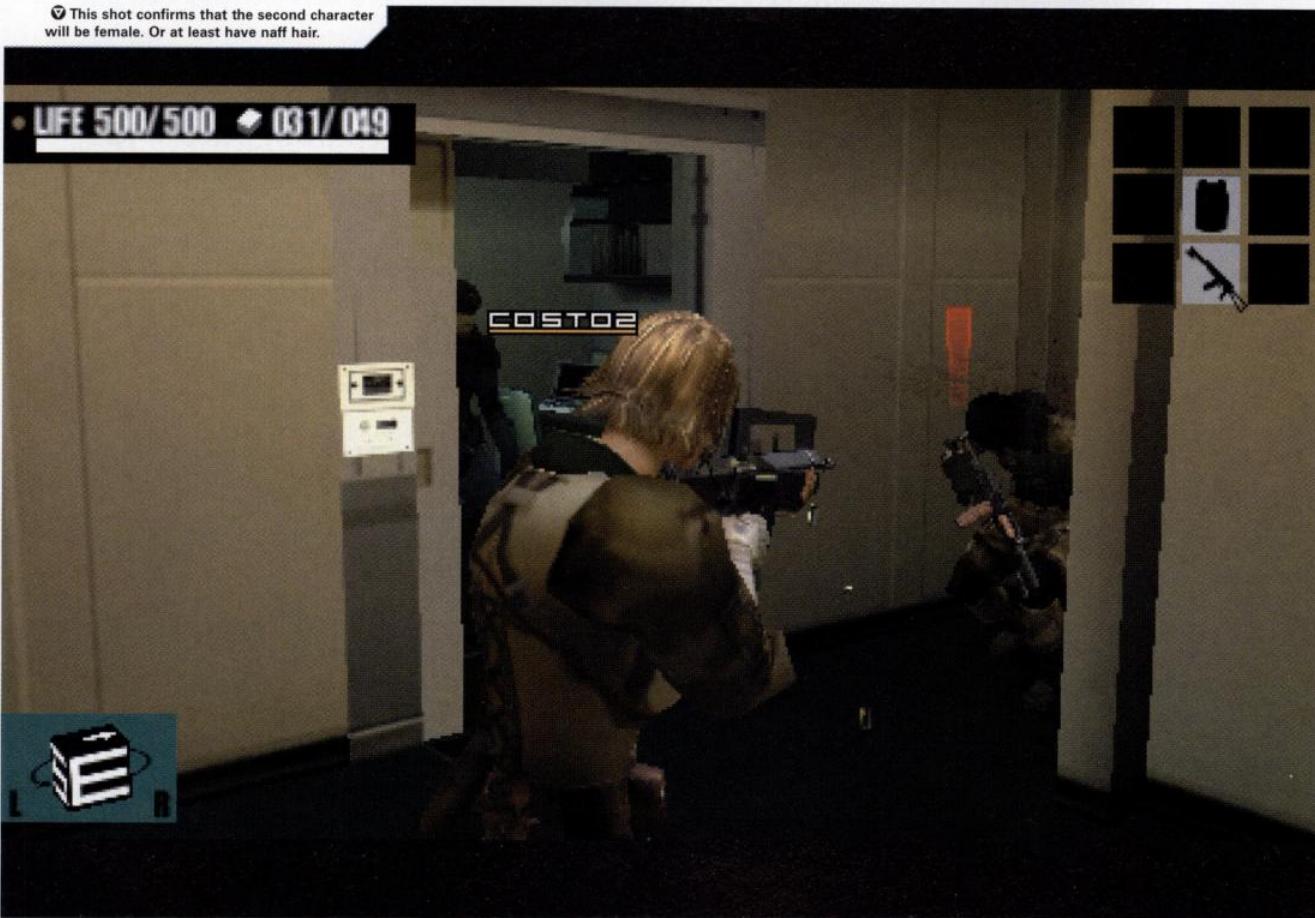
« WHAT THEY SAY



▀ This shot confirms that the second character will be female. Or at least have naff hair.



▀ And so we desperately try and work a 'decking' pun in here. And fail.



WHO DAT GIRL?

A second character? A female second character? Unlike Raiden, this new character has breasts and quite possibly balls. So what does this tell us? Well, the PSP has Wi-Fi technology, which will enable you to link up with other PSP's in the hizzy. Here comes some WILD conjecture – *Metal Gear Acid* will be Wi-Fi compatible and is therefore quite possibly going to enable a two-player game. There's no proof of this – but it is scientific fact.



Even though all manga girls look pretty, if a real girl had similar features we'd probably laugh in her warped face.



▀ Punctuation marks make a welcome return to the series.



▀ In no way is this game designed just to show off the PSP's graphical capabilities.



▀ We haven't a clue what's going on here, so we're just going to avoid doing a caption.



▀ Interestingly, this is going to be the first non-stealth *Metal Gear* game.



LEGO STAR WARS

VITAL STATISTICS

PUBLISHER: Eidos
DEVELOPER: Traveller's Tales
WEB SITE: www.eidos.com

GENRE
» ACTION
» ADVENTURE

NO. PLAYERS
» 1-2

TAKE NOTE:

- Star Wars...
- Lego...
- And it's not crap! No really, it's not!

ANTICIPATION



FROM THE PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT YOU...

HAVEN: CALL OF THE KING
CRASH: WRATH OF CORTEX

86%
73%

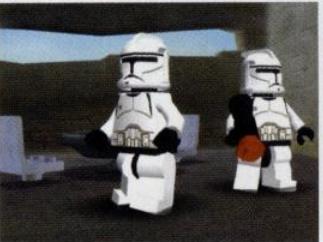
RELEASE DATE
APRIL 2005



How cool would it feel to send all these guys flying with a force-wave of the arm?



As well as platform/action sections, there will be some Lego-centric space battles, too.



Don't expect their aim to be any less rubbish with those oversized blasters.



As the graphics are Lego-stylised, there are massive scenes filled with character models.

FORCE PREDICTION

Everyone knows what happens at the end of *Episode III*, right? Or at least, we know that Anakin somehow goes from whining simpleton to the 'more machine than man' overlord of the galaxy. However, any gamers out there who want to know more would be well advised to pick up a copy of *Lego Star Wars* when it is released and plough through it, as the game will have a full month's lead on *Revenge Of The Sith*, which isn't released until the third week of May!



The power of the universe in the palm of your hand. Is there a better weapon in the galaxy than a lightsaber?

LEGO STAR WARS

A SPACE EPIC SEPARATED INTO SMALLER BLOCKS

As we mentioned in last month's Game Stars Live show report, the Eidos stand was a big hit because of the presence of one game. And no, we're not referring to *Champ Manager 5*, but to Eidos' collaboration with Giant to bring George Lucas's flashier-but-less-spectacular trilogy to the PS2. From the outset of *The Phantom Menace*, guiding Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon through the Yellow Peril's space fortress, all the way through to the Skywalker/Kenobi battle that will seal the fate of the galaxy at the end of *Revenge Of The Sith*, it's an all-out action

spectacular, playable in co-operative two-player mode.

Players are charged with building and controlling a party of multiple characters, which can be switched between to harness specific skills (C-3PO, for example, has the ability to disable locks). Additionally, as well as using 'sabers', blasters and other standard space

weapons of long, long ago, you are also charged with the power of the force, but this being a Lego-based Star Wars license, anything you move with your midichlorians rather than your hands disassembles into separate Lego bricks, only to rebuild itself as something completely different at the other end of the room. Sold. ■

ANYTHING YOU MOVE WITH YOUR MIDICHLOLIANS DISASSEMBLES INTO SEPARATE LEGO BRICKS



When nine hundred years old you reach,
look this rectangular you will not.



REVIEWS

'Awesome air', 'wicked height', and 'a tweaky nose bone to 360 degree foot roll' may well be completely authentic skateboard terms, but we can't say for sure. It's a confusing thing for a grown man to be confronted with an alien culture that needs to be appreciated in great detail to glean the most enjoyment from a game, but Will went beyond confusion to live and breathe 'skateboarding' (literally) for our four page review of *THUG 2* this issue. Yep, four pages.

play™ is officially announcing it loves games again. That's love with tongue.

We also love **games™**'s Lukémon Albiges in a brotherly way, because he too loves games, especially *Viewtiful Joe*. We love Capcom. We love Obscure and its two-player coop, because solo love is not as good as love with a friend. We love Gradius V for being hardcore, even if it is hard love. And we love Future Tactics, for having sweet tactics in it.

Oh, and you may have noticed a certain high-profile game about stealing cars (or something). There's a picture of it to this column's right. We love it too.

44

GRAND THEFT AUTO SAN ANDREAS



12:21

Stupid games? This is my heart you play with!

50

3 1200
SWITCH
1000 GOAL PTS.

TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2

68

MORTAL KOMBAT DECEPTION

84

EYETOY: PLAY 2

66

+30

KILLZONE
450



REVIEWS

Where games truly become art...

44 GRAND THEFT AUTO SAN ANDREAS

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PLAY™ GUARANTEE

Should you buy these games? That's the question we ask every time we review software. The **play™** team has more than 20 years of experience in the industry and bring every minute of that knowledge to each review. We don't get out much, so most of our common language is based on non-existent words like "playability" and "immersive" - we know so much about our craft it hurts.

GUIDE TO THE GRADES

We spend hours arguing over the stupidest things so every game gets the score it deserves.

90 - 100: Daddy's happy.

80 - 89: Special but not quite 'money'.

70 - 79: Enjoyable but still flawed.

60 - 69: Adequate.

50 - 59: Not bad, not good. Okay.

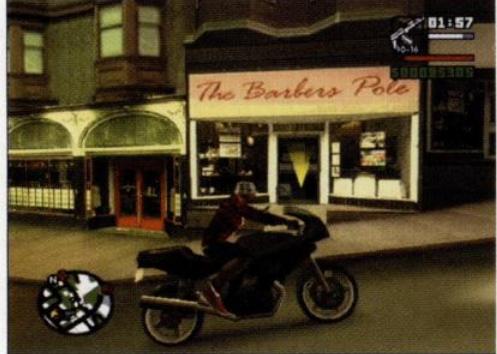
40 - 49: Tedious.

30 - 39: Poor.

20 - 29: Rubbish.

10 - 19: Appalling.

00 - 09: Nooooooooooooooo!!!!



Something for the weekend? You can't even get a haircut in San Fierro without having to deal with a double entendre.



Spontaneous violence a-hu-huh! This Elvis impersonator performs an unprovoked attack on CJ just because he's semi-naked. Prejudiced mo-fo.



Crap. That's another \$10 000 down the toilet. It took us 564 murders to get that money. Oh well, back to killing-sprees it is then.



Try to inspect a secret area in the desert and you'll have to deal with helicopters, and truly delicious lighting.

GTA, it's just glorification of violence! The clue is in the name, diddywads – what did you expect? Flowers and puppies?

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

YOU ARE NOW ABOUT TO WITNESS THE STRENGTH OF STREET KNOWLEDGE



Denise loves to be driven through oncoming traffic at speed. She's sat dressed in baggy sports clothes on the back of the motorbike, her hands behind her back holding onto the pillion bar and her Intratec TEC-9 pistol. It's not the most accurate weapon, but she likes it – it matches her earrings and Denise just loves to pop caps at rival gangs. It was a cheap date since both the gun and the bike are stolen. Could have taken her to a restaurant but she didn't like the location. We pulled over in a back street and it is time to see if she's ready for a kiss. No. No action yet. She's tired and wanted to go home. Maybe she wasn't that shined on by our clothes. Going out wearing nothing but jockey shorts and a cowboy hat might not have been the best way to impress such a classy girl. We drive back through the streets

wall, they got out of their ride and were shot to death by men with badges. Man, that was ruthless. A stray cop shot hit the fuel tank and the lowrider detonated, flames hit the cop's car and it goes off like a hooker at an after-show party. Luckily our bike was at a safe distance. We mounted back up and go for a shortcut to The Grove but, damn, the road is blocked by what looks like a WWII fighter plane. This in itself doesn't seem as odd as the black and white markings on its charred wings that suggest it was used during D-Day. The state could well be insane. We took another route back, dropped off Denise at her crib and noticed a bar that appeared out of nowhere in the top left of our field of vision. It says that we've got a long way to go with her before she'll put out. Damn it feels good to be a gangsta.

YOUR MIND STARTS TO MELD MEMORIES TOGETHER INTO ONE MASSIVE, HOT SMILE OF RECOLLECTION

+ of Los Santos listening to Shabba Ranks' Wicked Inna Bed.

The bike was less steady than our understanding of Ranks' lyrics, especially thanks to Denise and her extra, but welcome, weight. Even with more practice it's doubtful that cop car could have been avoided. Why was he driving like such a crazy fool for anyway? Oh, that's right – five-oh was chasing crooks until the perp car slammed right into a

This happened in *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*. Or at least that's how we remember it going down. After so many hours of constant play your mind does start to meld memories together into one massive hot smile of recollection. This is the game that has had us giggling over its fold-out map, you understand. If we were dancing around like a cat in a microwave just because of the cartography, you can imagine how happy we were when a



At time of going to press we had yet to find the mullet. Expect the next GTA to be all about ice hockey hair.



Here we're going up river in a boat for no reason other than that we can. We're simple like that.



Yes, it's the 'stand on the bonnet while a ped drives and you shoot people' move made famous by this very sentence.

PIMPING AND RIDES

ALL THE JOY OF PIMPING WITH NONE OF THE STD'S

Yep, you can pimp hos should you steal a pimpmobile and press R3 – just like the taxi and ambulance missions from before. Actually, turning out women for cash and beating up any John that doesn't treat them right isn't the only kind of pimping available – you can pimp your ride too. Any car (but not bike) in the game can be fitted with new spoilers, wheels, nitro boosters, hydraulics, exhausts and snazzy paintwork. If you find yourself being chased by cops you can have a Nitro boost fitted to assist your getaways (we just love an unfair advantage), but be warned. Any paint job is lost when you visit a pay 'n' spray. Still, you can play at being as a pimp in a pimped-out pimpmobile. And to think our career advisor said we were crazy. Bitch better learn...



Over the past few days we've learnt that the best way to pick up chicks is to pay for them.



Pimping your low ride up to the hilt is always going to help with the motion blur-inducing races.



Nitro boosts not only look cool, they're worth every cent if winning races is your thing.



After six days constant play, with no food but a stale pretzel and flat beer, Will finally cracks and decides to attack the sun head on. This attack was destined to fail because, and we quote, "It keeps on moving through the sky like a dick." Have you played GTA: San Andreas and managed to destroy the sun? Write in and lie to us.



The Clown's Pocket Casino, you can't gamble here – only in Caligula's and The Four Dragons.



There's not many times in our lives that we'll get to wonder around freely with a bow-tie and a sniper rifle.



Some have said they feel uncomfortable with the fact that CJ is black. These people are morons.

WE HADN'T EVEN STARTED THE GAME PROPERLY AND ALREADY OUR CYCLING ABILITIES HAD IMPROVED

brief flirtation with dating to dancehall music ends up with a desecrated crime scene.

When GTA III was released, it entered an empty arena. No game had its size or scope, detail or humour. It was untouchable. The world has changed since then, other publishers have taken note of what GTA III meant and have released games they insist aren't GTA-clones. The fact that Driv3r enabled you to run about and shoot was a coincidence. True Crime: Streets Of LA isn't at all similar. And anyway – look – a softly accurate map of LA. The Getaway? Nothing like it – look – the London Eye! The world has changed, but one thing that has remained constant is the hardware capabilities of the PlayStation2. It's the same as it ever was, so how come a) no other publisher has managed a game of GTA III's quality and b) San Andreas is so much of an evolution?

In the months leading up to the game's release much has been said about the size of the game. The first thing we did when we started playing was to take a BMX and go for a ride to see how far too far could go. Suddenly we're not really playing a game anymore. We're on a BMX and we're going for a ride around our new neighbourhood. Thoughts of testing the game's size were drowned out by the subtle sound of rubber tyre ripping across concrete. We pulled wheelies, found shortcuts across some wasteland, pushed hard up steep hills and freewheeled down the other side as the speed became so much of a concern that we had to break and take a breath. After this exploratory period it was time to actually go and go and perform the mission, meet up with some characters and re-tag some graffiti with our own. Our short detour spin around had already earned us

extra bike skill. We hadn't even started playing the game properly and already our cycling abilities had improved. The next time we cycled we would be able to pull longer wheelies. Later on we would bunny hop over speeding cars. Just for a giggle.

San Andreas starts off small and intimate. You're Carl Johnson and you've come back from Liberty City because your mom has been murdered. Your childhood friends welcome you, but it ain't no big thing and since you went away after the death of one of your brothers they're not that sure of you. You get a few banged fists here, a pat on the back there. No real love. Not yet.

CJ has a background but nothing that should define his actions in the game. He's not a moody, silent convict or a bagman for the mafia, just a street punk with a slightly shady past who returns to his family home and



Will so loved the use of electric blue that he used two screenshots that show similar situations. But come on – just look how pretty it is.



Locate a two-player icon and you and a buddy can go on a rampage. Look! One of us is riding a bike – the other rides and shoots! Uber-kewl!



We got corn rows going with a fat basketball vest that totally pops when it meets our groovy-ass pants. And a gun.

HIS DARK PLACES

YOU'RE NOT YOU – YOU'RE ME

Carl Johnson exists in a story. He's also you, which makes for some unusual moments. Since you can customise CJ's look, there's nothing stopping you from wearing nothing but a pair of pants and a hockey mask. This means that any cut scene will feature you in pants and a hockey mask. It means that, within cut-scenes, people will talk to you as if that's just what CJ wears, nothing wrong with it. This hilarity-ridden personality disorder is further built upon when you watch a cut-scene, hear people talking to CJ as if he's quite normal while only you know that he's just spent the past three hours running in and out of bushes with a hunting knife, murdering old people by stealth. So tell us CJ, how exactly is it hanging?

decides to check out the neighbourhood on a bike.

This sense of belonging in a world, of playing a role in a believable setting, defines *San Andreas* as something special. You don't go looking for medipacks to pick up health, you pop into a fast food joint and buy some food. You're not dealing with people in a foreign city; you start off just doing favours for friends. It's about respect, getting respect and using respect. You can gain respect by performing missions for friends or corrupt cops. You can gain respect by killing rival gang members. You can gain respect by working out at the gym and keeping your body ripped, or by wearing the right gang colours, the right gang tattoos or by making sure you have a fresh haircut. As you complete early missions you don't earn huge amounts of cash – just enough to get yourself cleaned up and presentable. San

Andreas keeps to the GTA template of placing points on the map where you can receive jobs, but thanks to an excellent script, a truly astounding map and believable characters it feels more like visiting friends or enemies than simply accessing sub-missions. Vehicle handling that shows off the individuality of each ride enhances this sensation to the point where a long drive in the right car becomes a pleasure in itself. A pleasure that becomes perverse when you realise that you haven't actually completed a mission for some time, but have opted instead to take a performance motorbike through the backstreets of the suburbs, into the hills and small towns and back to Los Santos so you can take a girl in sportswear for the ride of her life. This isn't just a place to play, it's a place where it's worthwhile just to exist.

Existing in this dark wonderland would be entertainment enough up

until the point where you pull out a gun and failed to hit a target thanks to an archaic control system. Woo-ha! CJ is as much a dandy on his toes as he is in a driving seat, and he's tasty with a gat. Maybe not at first, but he gets there since the more you use a certain weapon, the greater your proficiency gets. You'll become more accurate, be able to shoot while running or handle two guns at once. You can gain

A REFRESHING CAN OF SPRUNK WILL HEAL SOME OF THOSE PARTS A HEALTH PACK CAN'T REACH

+ experience with a weapon in the streets, or on a mission. Or you can just spend a few afternoons at the gun range. Movement has finally been given to both analog sticks set to the classic move/look configurations and the rigid crouch of Vice City has become your ability to move while

crouched, thus keeping a stealthy profile. Stealth works, so you can infiltrate areas and steal past enemies who would usually present unavoidable obstacles, or use a knife and attack from behind. The level of depth now given to gunplay enables strategic and thoughtful combat that makes the battles of Vice City seem like the first steps of a newborn pony. Whether you have to sneak up on a farm at twilight,

+ or are causing havoc in a motel complex while a SWAT team abseils in, you'll have the best possible grip on the situation. Should you find yourself injured, a refreshing can of Sprunk from a vending machine will help heal those parts a health pack can't reach. Gotta love those details.



Anyone who has ever been to Vegas will know that there is always a time in the night when someone walks around in their pants, causing trouble. This time it's us.

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: Rockstar | DEVELOPER: Rockstar North | PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: MA15+ | WEB SITE: www.rockstar.com



IN THE KNOW

Set in 1992 in the fictional state of San Andreas.

Features an eclectic music selection ranging from ragga to country.

Features the largest and most detailed world available on a console.

PRIOR FORM

GTA III blew us away while Vice City added Eighties music and motorbikes and got a point less for being pretty much as expected. Although the series is immensely popular planet-wide it still has detractors who see the games as 'just violence'. These people generally fantasise about women with eyes the size of fists and purple hair.

REVIEW



RELEASE DATE OUT NOW

» IF THIS GAME WAS

A TYPE OF CONFECTIONERY IT WOULD BE A NEVER-ENDING GOBSTOPPER

Your mouth can hardly take it and the flavours keep coming. Wow – roast beef and Yorkshire pudding... spotted dick and custard!

STAND OUT MOMENTS



Riding around the city on a push bike, yet still we're a street-hip gangsta!



Posing by trucks while wearing a Kato mask never stops being fun.

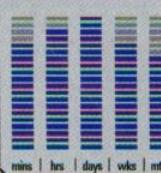


Vomiting in a restaurant, then decapitating everyone is always a laugh.



Once more for the people at the back: jumping The World's Largest Cock.

PLAYTIME



WARRIOR COME OUT AND PLAY

R.E.S.P.E.C.T. You'll find out that it's good for getting relative strangers into your car so you can drive them off to certain death. The more respect you have, the more of your 'homies' you can take with you. Just target someone wearing your gang colours and press up or down on the d-pad to ask if they want to roll with you. They place image over integrity and so will respect you more if you look the part. This shallow-mindedness also informs their artificial intelligence. Drive past anyone from another gang and your boys will lean out and start shooting. If you take them with you on foot they can be made to stay put, or keep up, but don't expect to be rolling with a version of the A-Team – they're not the best shots, and they don't know much about taking cover.



Just so you know, this is a stunt, not a bug.

Everything is relative so consider this. San Andreas takes place in an entire state. You can drive from one end to the other and even if you find that a bridge is out due to an earthquake (read: plot device) you can still swim and so could go anywhere from the moment you first load. We wouldn't advise it, though, because if a destroyed bridge isn't enough to keep you on a leash then the two corrupt cops who pulled you in at the start of the game will be. They've got your prints on a gun used to kill an officer. Go too far and they'll hand in the evidence, thus your wanted level will be high enough to make progress close enough to impossible to be totally impractical. You will die, probably sooner rather than later. This means that although you can theoretically go anywhere, it isn't advisable to try until you have completed all the missions in and around Los Santos. The sense of freedom is kept while a necessary structure is enforced and the game can take you through the new controls and features that you will need to understand. This doesn't make the game feel like it is being drip fed to you. It helps you understand the scale of your surroundings. And until you have moved on



Sure, games can become hobbies, but how many games are there that you can develop hobbies within? In GTA we've taken up photography, cruising, casual sex (yes – finally!), listening to country and western, pool, and gambling.



CJ listens to Catalina recount her Driv3r story. It's kind of pointless to bring that up now though.



This lady asks you to "schlurp her burger". We think it's innuendo, but we're too out of the loop to remember.

to San Fierro you won't grasp what you were really doing in Los Santos anyway. The whole opening act is an introduction. It felt like a full game, but it was really one long training level there to tell you what you need to know about yourself and how you can act in your environment.

We spend twenty hours in our 'hood. Twenty hours before a plot twist hit that throws the Menace II Society-style of the narrative totally out of focus and shows how epic the game really is. The electric buzz of Los Santos' Los Angeles style is replaced by the sight of Carl Jonson hiding out in a small hick town having been told to hook up with the sister of our sister's boyfriend. She's Catalina, possibly the most hot-blooded Latino woman to ever underline a stereotype and her emotions always run high. She loves to rob convenience stores and she needs you for crowd control detail. Denise will not be happy.

Here's the situation: It's getting late in the day and dollar signs on the map are suggesting stores that can be robbed. White Wedding by Billy Idol is on the radio as we roll into the small and unsuspecting town of Blueberry while rain grates the windshield of

our station wagon. "Hey little sister, what's your thoughts and wish? Hey little sister shotgun – oh yeah" and so we decide to roll up to the gun store to stock up for the heist. We had enough iron, but felt some inspiration for something more persuasive than a nine millimetre. "It's a nice day for a white wedding."

Slightly low on energy so it was time to pick up a slice of pizza, just to make sure we were in tip-top condition. Ate the slice, 12-gauge in our hand. In the real world, we're drinking a cup of tea. Put it down, pick up the game pad and we're accidentally pointing our gun in someone's face. There was a mission to deal with; we've got no business with these people. There was no reason to pull the trigger and start a massacre in a pizzeria. There was certainly no reason to snap pictures of the dead bodies and cowering survivors.

Why did this happen and who's to blame? At this point we're pointing a bloody finger at Billy Idol and so feel compelled to change the radio station of our wagon as we drive away. Crazy by Willie Nelson chills the air, "Worry? Why do I let myself worry, wondering what in the world did I do?" The

GOOD POINTS

- Seamless transition between town and country.
- It's so detailed that it makes your town seem bland.
- Customisation means that he's your CJ.

**BAD POINTS**

- Cars still don't handle properly.
- Features Shabba Ranks (although secretly we love the fact that it does).
- Not totally bug-free.



rain stops and we arrive at our destination. Catalina won't shut up, but we just want to be quiet for a minute while we work out what just happened. We're still not quite sure, but we do know one thing: It's something you can't get from watching a movie and it's something elusive to games that pretend they're nothing like GTA.

We've been here before, of course, since *GTA II*, *III* and *Vice City* featured a radio that played a range of music that guaranteed situations that juxtapose tunes against your actions to create a unique

country feels like driving cross-country. Knotted interchanges on the highway take time to get used to, you need to check your map and you need to set waypoints on your map or you will get lost. Stop by a set of traffic lights and refuse to move on a green light and someone impatient will overtake you.

You can just watch vehicles, or the pedestrians and you are watching something bordering on reality. Even in a small town accidents happen – people get robbed, cops will chase robbers and

Francisco and Las Venturas' show-stopping impression of Las Vegas and it's going to be one hell of a further education.

In six pages you might expect to know of everything you could ever hope to expect from a game. How you can buy property and take over gang turf to earn money, dance in nightclubs or with the hydraulics of a lowrider, play a game of pool, shoot basketball hoops or have a flutter in casinos. You might expect to hear more about the game's foul-mouthed dialogue and how it is so well-judged and delivered by characters so diverse that you'd never think they'd appear in the same game together. And you'll be busting to know how you can pimp out prostitutes. You can. But with so much to cover, most has been left out hopefully for you to discover yourself. *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* is far greater than the rather large equation that is the sum of its parts. It's not about the fun you can have pottering around on an off-road bike, or shooting cops with an AK-47 from the sunroof of a getaway car, it's about being in one long and deeply worthwhile experience that manages to do the almost-impossible and improve on what has gone before, and then has the confidence to expand itself to a size that defies belief. Pack some sandwiches, it's going to be a long trip. ■

THERE WAS NO REASON TO PULL THE TRIGGER AND START A MASSACRE IN A PIZZERIA

mood. What *San Andreas* does is make such moments deeper and more personal because the world itself is deeper and more personal. You feel like you're far from a home you have invested a great deal of time in. There's no doubt that the universe that *San Andreas* paints exists and you're in it. The longer you play and the further you get in the story, the more it feels like a dreamscape than a traditional game. This is partially just down to the size and level of detail, partly down to the brilliantly scripted story but mostly down to *San Andreas* being so believable. Driving cross-

robbers will chase victims, while everyone loves to chatter in their more sedate, most probably inbred way. Only when you are working in the country and are thinking back to all that you accomplished in Los Santos do you begin to understand what the size of the game means, and this understanding carries on to your anticipation of what lies ahead. This feeling can be described in three words: 'Oh', 'my' and 'god'. You've had a lick of a city based on the look, feel and colour of Los Angeles. Think of that as your first week in a new school. It's on to San Fierro's take on San

TWO-SLAYER

COME ON OVER TO MY PLACE. HEY YOU! WE'RE HAVING A MASSACRE...

You'll look at the back of the *San Andreas* box and you'll see that the game has a two-player option. It has. Almost and, in a way, kind of. Two-player mode works like Rampages from the other *GTA* games. Find a two-player icon, collect it and the game will become two-player! Yes! Well, only for a Rampage. The second player can select from a variety of character types from Elvis to a Vegas Showgirl, you go on a kill-a-thon. You can even steal bikes, one drives and the other guns. These sections are novelties with a capital NOVELTIES, but hey – they're quite fun even if you spend most of your time shooting off screen.



This is what you get when you don't leave a tip.

And this is what you get for minding your own business.



A stripper joins you in a Two-player Rampage. We're not sure if it's a game, but by God is it fun. And something we've wanted since the doctor refused us corrective surgery.



That is a katana in our hand and, yes, we are pleased to see you. Sometimes you just have to stop and pose.



VERDICT

LOOKS

There are slight problems, but the creation of a believable world is spot-on.

SOUND

Excellent radio and music for most tastes, though the guns seem a bit 'poppy'.

GAMEPLAY

Some tiny problems get dwarfed by so much gaming greatness.

LONG TERM

This isn't so much a game as it is a holiday that lasts for as long as you want it to.

OR YOU COULD TRY



GETAWAY: BLACK MONDAY
If you like angry, soul-free men who swear in London then be our guest.

41%



TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF LA
Compared to *GTA* this is feels as artificial as wearing a fake tan and pretending to be a surfer.

72%

SUMMARY

You don't so much play it as move into a nice new neighbourhood. A neighbourhood that's got so much more going on than the one you've just come from. *Grand Theft Auto* has evolved and a new benchmark in excellence has been set. Make no mistake, this is truly awesome.

99
PERCENT



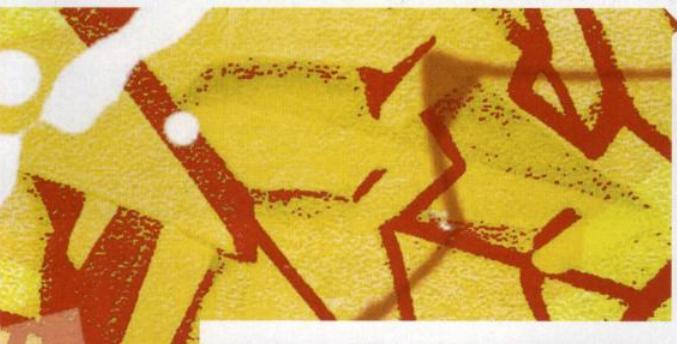
Barcelona as described by a skate park designer. Note the Salamander – it, like, totally exists in the real world.



Cut-scenes do absolutely nothing to reject the myth that all men are sex-obsessed jerk-bodies.

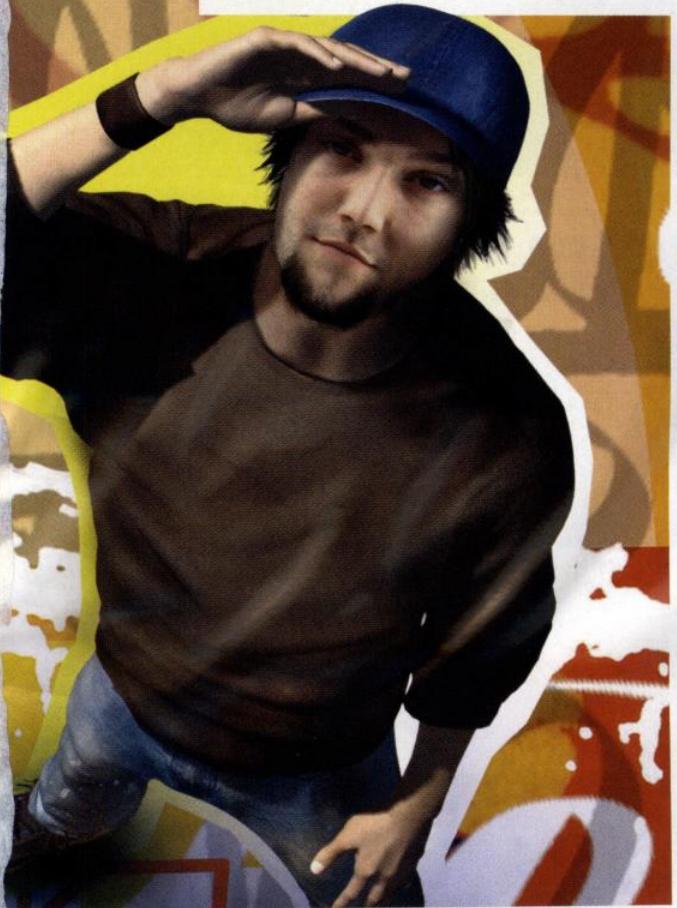


This bonus character is a bit like onions. You know, it has layers. That's right – we're Katzenberg whores.



TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2

IF CREAMING FOUR MILLION, THREE HUNDRED THOUSAND, SIX HUNDRED AND NINETY POINTS ISN'T FOR YOU – GO TO HELL



Beat that! We'd like to claim these two words and hand them straight to Neversoft. They deserve it. This is the sixth *Tony Hawk's* game in seven years and the series has still to be beaten, despite a number of attempts (some worthy, some not-so worthy).

Not only have the games convinced the world that extreme sports (Woah! Awesome!) are viable themes for videogames, they managed to re-package successive incarnations of the same man-on-wood formula and make them work, while the games' soundtrack selection

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THE GAME'S SOUNDTRACK SELECTION COULD ONLY BE CONSIDERED SECOND TO GTA: SAN ANDREAS

+

could only be considered second to *GTA: San Andreas*. For the purpose of this review we'll consider *San Andreas* more a novelty. So there you go. *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* is good for you, good for us and good for the man himself, who has apparently made more from licensing his name to this fine Activision product than actually turning up to events and skateboarding – professionally. Nice work if you can get it.

Last year the world was introduced to the word 'Underground'. Thank you so much, Activision and Electronic Arts.

Whenever someone says 'Underground' we now think of a slight desperation to make extreme sports seem more edgy and 'alternative' by an industry that has made a fortune by making them mainstream. It's a testament to the power of marketing, when you think about it.

Tony Hawk's Underground was given the acronym 'THUG'. Yes, sub editors of the world let out a scream – the 'G' in 'underground' should not really be capitalised. Ease down, you're just grinding metal. It doesn't matter. 'THUG' looks cool, and it means we can call

+

number two 'THUG 2' and everyone will be singing from the same hymn sheet.

Even the biggest difference between the original four *Hawk's* games was small compared to what *Underground* brought, and it split audiences. Fans unashamed to be referred to as 'hardcore' felt that running about on foot and clambering on obstacles rather than flying over them while pointing their knees to the four winds took away the purity of the skating experience and was one nod toward *GTA* too far, while newbies were met by a game that wanted to be about skateboarding.



Each level's bonus non-pro character rides a vehicle which, to be honest, isn't quite as fun as a proper 'board.'



Yes, we are totally using a chainsaw while grinding a powerline. NB: The use of the word 'totally' is entirely ironic.



It's Bam's poppa Phil Margera – in pants – just as Bam demands. Some people find this really funny.

TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: Activision | DEVELOPER: Neversoft | PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: M15+ | WEB SITE: www.neversoft.com



1-2 (2-8 online) Memory Card Dual Shock 2

IN THE KNOW

The age rating is as much about the musical content as it is about the skateboarding.

Go online and get beaten by children!

Makes you think 'if I could just get some more practice'.

PRIOR FORM

Hindsight is 20/20 vision and so we can now tell you that the original *Underground* really did try too much to give you a *GTA*-on-a-'board feel that hamstrung some of the glory in riding a 'board. We liked it, but going back to try it out after a few days of *Underground 2* is like moving back home after tasting what freedom really is about.

REVIEW



RELEASE DATE
8 OCTOBER

» IF THIS GAME WAS

AN INSPIRATIONAL MOVIE IT WOULD BE DOG TOWN AND THE Z-BOYS

Even if you detest skaters as posing knobcourters, half an hour into Dog Town and you'll be convinced that skating rules.

STAND OUT MOMENTS



We, like, totally claimed that bonus! We're just too awesome.



We, like, totally claimed that bonus! Again! We're just too radical!

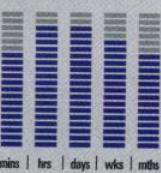


Ohmagod! We, like, totally claimed that bonus in a sick stylee.



We totally found bonus character and founding father Benjamin Franklin.

PLAYTIME



FREAK OUT

CHRIST ALIVE, DOES AVRIL LAVIGNE MAKE US ANGRY

"Try to tell me what I shouldn't do/You should know by now/I won't listen to you/Walk around with my hands/Up in the air/Cause I don't care." Well done Avril Lavigne, for making pointless acts of rebellion cool again. *Freak Out* – it's not just a song but a new way of keeping points in *Underground 2*. When performing trick combinations, you will build up points. Fall off your 'board and you used to lose all these shiny, happy numbers, but not anymore... By hammering ⚡ you can make your skater 'do an Avril' and act out an almost pointless act of anger on your 'board. The more you freak out, the more points you keep. More a novelty than a must have, but at least it's not so com-pli-ca-ted.



Feeling angry beyond repair? play™ suggests temper tantrums punctuated by deadly swearing.

and then seemed to force them to race cars (with atrocious handling) and knock over drug dealers. Although filled with a wide variety of the skating goodness we had come to expect, the message was confused. Fans were divided. Neversoft has been listening.

Tony Hawk is getting on and hasn't actually been a Pro Skater since game number four, hence the need to drop the 'Pro Skater' bit from the title. Now we're at the second game in the *Underground* incarnation of Mr Hawk's videogame outings and it's time to get in some fresh blood and new ideas. Both of these ideals are held in perfect harmony by the very concept of the man that is Bam Margera. He's an unconventional skater, a star of *Jackass* and the physical embodiment of *Underground*'s fresh direction. It's the World Destruction Tour



See how the screen says 'Impossible', well that's how good we are. It didn't just happen over night though – it happened over one day. We're friggin' awesome at games, and that's why we get paid the big bucks.



Each level features a hidden pro-character as well as one rather bizarre type, although they all look this stupid.



Rodney 'The Mutt' Mullen doing his technical best in Focus mode. Note the extra zoom and the shiny lighting. Awesome.

and it's all about travelling cities of the world and pissing people off. This antagonism is bizarrely lacking in malice though, and basically simmers down to two teams headed by Bam and Tony trying to get points for performing set goals. These range from simply scaring pigeons, beating high scores through skateboard mastery, to unleashing hell on Earth – and then leashing it again. It's that ker-azy.

This World Destruction Tour supplies you with levels based on six areas including Boston, Barcelona, Berlin, and New Orleans (grab it while you still can!). By heck, they are big and varied locales to skate. Each has a definitive feel beyond some nods to real-world detail (the salamander in Barcelona's Park Guell can be grinded) and feature shifting weather systems and a day/night

time cycle. Compared to the previous *Underground*, these worlds are cleaner, more detailed, vibrant and feature layer after layer of skate-able terrain. Oddly enough, the less they worry about realism, the more they feel alive and always pleasure to explore. Even just for points, or posing. The mood for the new game is archaic, goofy happiness, and it shows and even those who find Margera et al edging on the obnoxious side will be hard pushed to say that his addition to the ethos of the game is not a resounding boon. It's tighter, yet looser and all-round better.

With this new take on skateboarding come a few new moves, none quite as insulting to the laws of energy conservation as the Natas spin where you can jump to any object that has a small surface head like a fire hydrant or post and spin for as long as your balance allows. This enables you to complete goals (Natas a hydrant and it will spurt water) but is a bugger to combo with other tricks due to you spinning so fast.

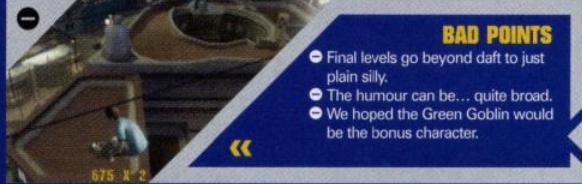
BAM'S A STAR OF JACKASS AND THE PHYSICAL EMBODIMENT OF UNDERGROUND'S FRESH DIRECTION

GOOD POINTS

- Tighter storyline makes for a more cohesive experience.
- Create-a-park, skater, goals – very customisable indeed.
- Brighter, happier skating.

**BAD POINTS**

- Final levels go beyond daft to just plain silly.
- The humour can be... quite broad.
- We hoped the Green Goblin would be the bonus character.



As with most things accomplished on a skateboard, it still looks sick as hell. We would like to apologise for that sentence and its use of the word 'sick', but we really can't keep saying 'cool'. Hey! Look at the calendar, it's 2004 – you know this game must feature Bullet Time or slow motion or something in a concession to the fact that everyone has seen *The Matrix*. Yes it does, and it works on two levels. Firstly, let's not forget that skateboarding is as much about style as it is about technical skill.

graffiti all around town where the size of your tag is directly related to how cool/sick/whatever your previous combo was. Sure, it's a cosmetic touch but one that will allow you to enter an online game and spray virtual walls with the mobile numbers of those who dare cross you. Okay, that is probably totally illegal. Don't do it. Our tags were so rude we couldn't print them here – use your imaginations.

Seven games in and Neversoft are trying to please all the people, all the

and collect bonuses on foot that you may have just missed. Classic mode isn't quite as classic as it should be and it does come across that Neversoft really, really want you to use these new controls even when there isn't much call for them, even in Story mode. Check out the demonstration movie – the skater can't help but run a bit, even though a veteran player will be able to reach most areas using sheer skating skill. We would suggest that they hire us if they want true skill demonstrated, but that guy with the beard on the other magazine over there has just gained in excess of seven million points in one combination move. Grrr.

If you have missed out on the whole *Tony Hawk's* thing, then expect *Underground* to welcome you with open arms and convert you like some mad prophet in a holy river. Even if you spend your spare time smashing glass in front of skaters, this game will make you understand. Those of you who have been with it since late last century may find the occasional gripe – but that's got more to do with you getting old than it does with problems with this game. It makes last year's effort look like a mild dose of depression. ■

BEING ABLE TO SEE HOW A TRICK, BE IT REAL OR IMAGINED, IS PULLED OFF IS A TREAT IN ITSELF

Being able to see how a trick, be it real or imagined, is pulled off in almost pornographic detail is a treat in itself. When you exchange time built up in your special bar by performing tricks for such visual nonsense, you also get more time to enter more complex moves. Bad news: this 'focus' move requires you to push the left analog stick and so won't be a shine on for bearded D-pad Luddites. Get off your 'board and you can spray customisable

time and in most part they have succeeded. Mostly. Classic mode is there for purists and attempts to give you all the thrills of the original *Pro Skater* by... including levels from the original *Pro Skater* along with those from the main game, albeit cut-down versions more useful for classic, two-minute run play. It also gives you *Underground* rules, which isn't completely unproblematic since you can now jump off your 'board at any point

**VERDICT****LOOKS**

Excellent details in some large cities that are worth skating in.

SOUND

Superb soundtrack punctuated by the sound of wheels on concrete.

GAMEPLAY

Once you get a grip on it, you will always want more, more, more.

LONG TERM

Hidden areas meet online play for a meaningful long-term relationship.

OR YOU COULD TRY

THUG
More white trash and *8 Mile* than *Jackass*, and somewhat grimmer for it.

90%



TONY HAWK'S 4
Proving that heaven could indeed be shaped like a giant half-pipe.

95%

SUMMARY

Like skating, once you've learned the skillz, you'll want to try them out everywhere. The new *Jackass* direction is handled with just enough restraint to make it a welcome addition. Will next year it be 'Bam Margera Pro Skater'? If this is a sign of the quality to come then he's welcome to take the reigns.

91
PERCENT

VIOLENTLY HAPPY

WILL'S GOT A PRETTY MOUTH

If you are as beautiful as PLAY's reigning Scatman Will, then no doubt you'll want to get your perfect face in the game. If you have an EyeToy then you can do it in seconds. If you want to use a phone or digital camera then you have to email your image to Activision, and then scoop it off the net. Get an EyeToy. Unless you're ugly, in which case you shouldn't be able to read this through the tears. Yes ladies, Will is all natural and built for pleasure – not speed.



Just take a picture and place the dots over your eyes, nose and mouth.



There you go. If you aren't Will, expect to be far, far uglier.



▲ If you replaced this guy with a fat, Italian plumber who had a penchant for eating mushrooms and riding dinosaurs, some people would be really excited by this screenshot.



▲ A ten year-old in a full body cast on a wheelchair. Yep. One of those cool electronic ones as well, none of that manual crap.

ROCKY LEGENDS

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: Ubisoft | DEVELOPER: Venom | PRICE: \$79.95
RATING: M15+ | WEB SITE: www.ubisoft.com



1-2 Player



Memory Card



Dual Shock 2

IN THE KNOW

Career mode features Rocky Balboa, Apollo Creed, Ivan Drago (not to be confused with Tony) and Clubber Lang.

Sadly the voice actors are all sound alike.

Two players can go head to head on the Training mode – one-on-one skipping woo!

REVIEW

RELEASE DATE
OUT NOW

» IF THIS GAME WAS

A BOXING COMEBACK IT'D BE 'AUSSIE' JOE BUGNER RE-ENTERING THE RING.

Some would think it the best idea ever, others the opposite. Either way it's not exactly a recipe for prize pugilism.

FIRST LEVEL



Here's Ivan Drago. He's vicious and communist, which makes him tough.



Ivan fights for himself alone. As well as this, he must break you.

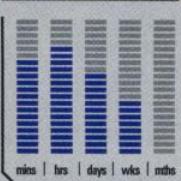


You could argue that he's not a machine, he's a man, he's a man.



But then again, you must remember that whatever he hits, he destroys.

PLAYTIME



▲ A childhood pastime for girls and training regime for badass men.

▲ "Clubber, what's your prediction for the fight?"
"My prediction? Pain."

▲ "No, I don't hate Balboa. I pity the fool." A quote that works on so many levels.

ROCKY LEGENDS

HOW'S THIS FOR A ROCKY LICENSE?

If a certain Stallone-fixated member of the **PLAY** team were to review *Rocky Legends* you can guarantee it would score at least 10 percent more than it has here thanks to the poignancy of the license. Enthusiasm multiplied by fervour. This is obviously the kind of equation Ubisoft has in mind. Boxing game + *Rocky* + 25 years old + older audience = can't fail game. The problem is that equation has failed once already. Sure, *Rocky* is undoubtedly a superb series to pilfer, but to the majority of people it's kitsch at best. Its star has fallen. Combine this rocky license (that's a heavyweight pun right there) with a genre of limited appeal, thanks in no small part to the fact that the sport itself isn't exactly at its zenith, and suddenly the sums all add up wrong.

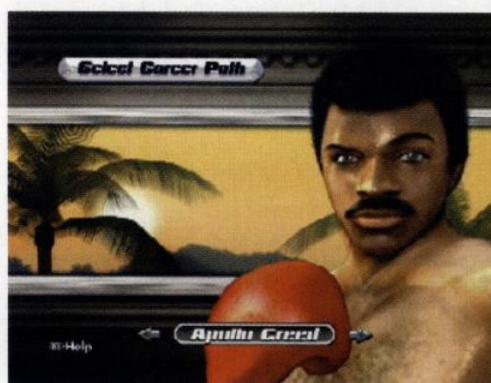
Acting as a prequel to the movies, *Legends* traces the career

paths of four of the most popular pugilists – Apollo Creed, Rocky, Ivan Drago and Clubber Lang – from grass roots level; Rocky battling on the streets, Ivan training in the Russian army and Clubber boxing from within a state penitentiary. An awesome and charismatic array of boxers then? Not once you get past the character select screen. Sadly opposing fighters are a ragtag group of caricatures with large quiffs or large guts. Still, they're all the same spread out on the canvas.

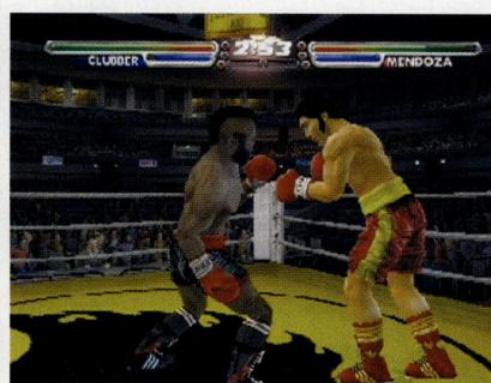
In order to take your fighter from obscurity to World Heavyweight Champion a rigorous training regime is necessary. In between bouts you can beef your character up by participating in a selection of exercises including skipping, chin-ups and bag work – they boast *Track And Field* or *Bemani* style controls and mastering them is satisfying and indeed vital.

Performing well on the skipping, for example, yields up to ten bonus points for speed; relying on the auto-train facility only yields five bonus points, which quite simply isn't enough to prevent your character being fisted in the ring as your career moves forward.

Just when it all sounds so promising though, it all falls apart. The boxing itself feels rigid and restrictive, while the punching animations don't feel nearly as convincing as the original *Rocky* game, with certain animations seemingly failing to connect for no reason. Bludgeoning foes as familiar anthems build in the background can prove suitably rousing, but in terms of overall accomplishment *Legends* pales when compared to the south-pawsome (*hot damn!*) *Fight Night*. ■



▲ He may be known as Apollo Creed to the world, but in **PLAY**'s collective heart, he'll always be Action Jackson. Yeah, that's right.



▲ "Why do they look like two boxers blue-screened together to make it look like they're fighting?" Mat Hoddy 2004. 'Why' indeed.



VERDICT

LOOKS

Environments are unexceptional, but the stars are easily recognisable.

SOUND

A truly awesome use of the *Rocky* movies' soundtracks make fights more rousing.

GAMEPLAY

Training modes add depth to some otherwise unremarkable boxing.

LONG TERM

Four careers to make or break and plenty of unlockables fill this one out.

OR YOU COULD TRY



ROCKY
Beefier punching and extra-caricatured style makes this superior.
ISSUE 95 90%



FIGHT NIGHT 2004
EA's pugilism sim inflicts brain damage on most other boxing games around.
ISSUE 115 81%

SUMMARY

While the original *Rocky* revelled in the over-the-topness of the movie series with exaggerated punch animations and sound effects, *Rocky Legends* has reined much of it in for a slightly more staid experience in favour of a broader, yet entirely limited, Career mode.

70
PERCENT

GRADIUS V

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: Konami | DEVELOPER: Treasure | PRICE: \$69.95
RATING: G8+ | WEB SITE: <http://www.konamityo.com/gr5/>



RELEASE DATE
OUT NOW

» IF THIS GAME WAS

A CHARACTER FROM A FILM IT WOULD BE TYLER DURDEN

It may be extremely pretty and well-defined, but underneath its sleek exterior is a game that just can't wait to kick the hell out you, have you begging for mercy, then do it some more.

FIRST LEVEL



When the first level boss appears, start shooting at those white bars.



When all the bullets start spraying, quickly fly over to its eye and stay there.

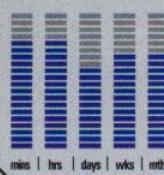


When these lasers appear, the craft will start to rotate in all directions.



Once he's taken enough punishment, he'll explode into pretty colours.

PLAYTIME



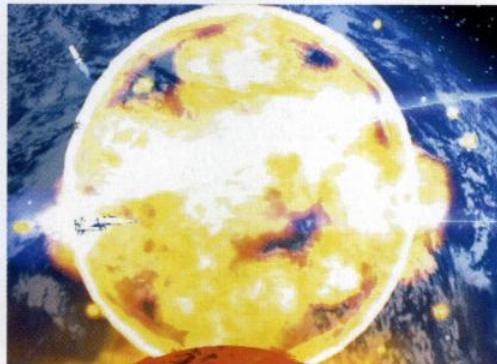
Many of the craft you face will be instantly familiar to fans of the series, those who aren't, however, will find them indistinguishable.

IN THE KNOW

From the makers of the mighty *Ikaruga* and *Radiant Silvergun*.

The continuation of a franchise that is now 19-years old.

Masses of unlockable power-ups to discover throughout.



It may be a 2D shooter, but there's no denying the visual panache that flourishes throughout the game.

GRADIUS V

TREASURE THIS: THE SIDE SCROLLING SHOOTER GETS A MEATY KICK UP THE BACKSIDE

What happens when you take one of the best-loved shooters of all time and get famed shoot-'em-up developers Treasure to create a sequel? Why, only one of the greatest examples of the genre ever made... Think we're being a little over-enthusiastic? Then you obviously haven't played *Gradius V*, a title that's so deliciously old-school, you'll find yourself wearing flared trousers and listening to A Flock Of Seagulls while you're playing it.

The most obvious thing you'll notice is the sheer, breathtaking beauty that Treasure has managed to cram into your humble PS2. Multicolour sparks fly as your Vic Viper scrapes up against the sides of the gorgeously detailed environments; enemies explode into a cocktail of orgasmic eye-candy while the game's majestic bosses warp, shimmer and stun you with

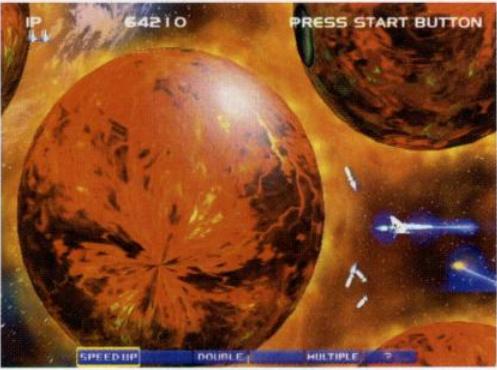
their abstract beauty and devastating firepower. After the dull, samey looking levels of *R-Type Final*, Treasure has created one of the most beautiful looking games, which will appeal to both graphic whores and fans of the original series. Fortunately, there's more to *Gradius V* than just good looks and Treasure has gone to great lengths to ensure that a fantastic soundtrack that simply oozes quality helps the onscreen blasting along. Fantastic, heavy rock-riffs constantly drive the game forwards and help to create a wonderfully frenetic atmosphere that defies you to put your DualShock down and walk away from the TV screen.

For all its stunning beauty, Treasure has realised that it's all for nothing if the gameplay isn't up to par and as a result it's created some of the most satisfying action that we've seen in a shooter for some time. One of the most important

additions to your Vic Viper is that its hit-box has now been greatly reduced. As a result, you're now able to graze up against enemy ships and bullets in a way that was never possible in the original games and this drastically improves the gameplay no end. Because the collision detection is so perfect, any deaths you suffer (and you'll lose many lives, as this is one tough game) will be entirely down to your own miscalculations. Despite the game's incredibly high difficulty level (that sometimes borders on the frustrating), the intricately designed levels, sumptuous visuals and razor-sharp gameplay will constantly pull you back, until all you can live for is annihilating your previous high score. *Gradius V* is, quite simply, one of the finest examples of the horizontally-scrolling shooter that you can buy. ■



This is one tough shooter. Don't be surprised if you lose a ridiculous amount of lives on your first attempt.



Both the *Gradius* and *Salamander* franchises are constantly referenced throughout the game. How many can you spot? None? Us too!



VERDICT

LOOKS

Stunning visuals that push the PS2 like no other shooter has managed.

SOUND

Seriously rocking tunes and fantastic spot effects create an aural delight.

GAMEPLAY

Incredibly simple to play, but it's an extremely difficult game to master.

LONG TERM

It won't take too long to complete, but you'll constantly return to it.

OR YOU COULD TRY



R-TYPE FINAL
Excellent swansong to the classic franchise that adds plenty of new elements.



GRADIUS III & IV
Whilst solid conversions of classic shooters, they haven't really aged very well.

SUMMARY

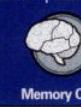
Take two handfuls of stunning visuals, mix in one heaped tablespoon of fantastic audio, add a massively generous helping of good-ol' fashioned gameplay and you have *Gradius V*. Yet again Treasure has added to and improved its pantheon of great 2D shooters.

84
PERCENT

FORGOTTEN REALMS: DEMON STONE

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: Atari | DEVELOPER: Stormfront Studios | PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: M15+ | WEB SITE: www.demonstone.com



IN THE KNOW

Takes place in the most well known D&D world.

Features a story by R A Salvatore (the novelist who killed off Chewie).

Has a unique and extremely useful character swapping system.

PRIOR FORM

No strangers to the world of *Dungeons & Dragons*, Stormfront Studios has already produced several titles for the much-loved RPG including *Treasures Of The Savage Frontier*, *Gateway To The Savage Frontier* and *Neverwinter Nights* (not the Bioware version of course). It's found recent success with its slash-'em-up based on the *Lord Of The Rings* franchise.



RELEASE DATE
OUT NOW

» IF THIS GAME WAS

A FILM IT WOULD BE
DUNGEONS &
DRAGONS

Whilst it will please the fans, the lack of well-known characters and familiar locations is bound to upset the more casual market.



Watch out for these vicious critters; they're extremely tough and pack one hell of a punch.



Unfortunately, the camera can often obscure the on screen action. Better be handy with the Z button.



Rannack's sword is of great interest throughout the game; you'll have to find out for yourself why though.

FORGOTTEN REALMS: DEMON STONE

WHO NEEDS FRODO BAGGINS WHEN YOU HAVE A BLOODY BIG SWORD?

So, you've re-invented the scrolling fighter with the enjoyable (but oh so repetitive) *The Two Towers*, gathered together an impressive voice cast to use in said game and created an extremely solid game engine, but now what? If you're Stormfront Studios you simply apply your talent to the highly successful *Dungeons & Dragons* license, upgrade the graphics engine and gameplay and add a whole new cast of A-list celebrities. Simple.

It may have a geekier reputation than a bunch of Klingon-speaking *Star Trek* fans, but there's no denying that the *Dungeons & Dragons* license makes a great setting for another fantasy fighter. Of course, Capcom had already had a strong stab (pun intended) at the license with *Tower Of Doom* and *Shadow Over Mystara*, but eight years is a long time in videogames and the license has since been applied to

several RPGs with great success. Well aware of the role playing game's fanbase, Stormfront Studios has set it's new adventure in the Forgotten Realms (easily the most popular D&D game world) persuaded best-selling novelist R A Salvatore to pen the script and given you the chance to play one of the best known D&D characters ever, namely the Dark Elf, Drizzt Do'Urden. Still, if you're not a D&D geek like this reviewer, you'll simply want to know one thing: is it any good?

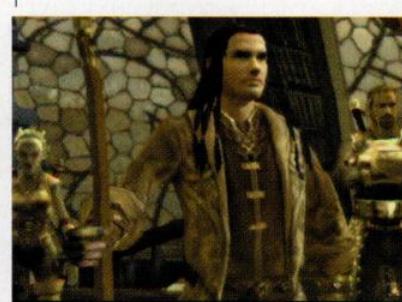
After seeing how greatly its engine had improved with the arrival of *The Return of the King*, it's fantastic to see that Stormfront Studios hasn't been content to rest on its laurels. Massive dragons cartwheel through the war-torn skies, spreading panic with their ferocious fire attacks and frightening presence, the battle-scarred landscapes are awash with intricate detail that gives *Demon Stone* an

almost movie-like quality, and the whole environment comes alive with numerous lighting and particle effects. After the commercial success of *The Two Towers* (now available on Platinum for those on a budget) it's obvious that Stormfront Studios is looking for similar success with *Demon Stone* and has used an almost identical template.

When three individuals unwittingly release two demon adversaries who have fought each other for centuries, they soon realise that destiny has drawn them together in order to trap the two combatants; the unlikely trio form an uneasy alliance in order to restore balance to the Realms. Whilst R A Salvatore's story explores many important aspects of the Realms mythos, it's strictly for the fans and will be of little interest to the average gamer. What will be tantalizing though, is the new gameplay element Stormfront has used to involve the player in the on-screen action. Like *The Two Towers*, *Demon Stone* has you controlling one hero, while the others fight alongside you. The difference here though, is that simple taps of the D-pad will enable you to select different characters at the press of a proverbial button.

Need to clear that seemingly impenetrable barrier? Then simply select Rannack the fighter and use his Gauntlets Of Ogre power to clear it. Need a way of avoiding pesky arrows? Then why not select Illius the sorcerer and use his magic to shield yourself and then hit back with some spectacular spells. Finally, the half-drow Zhai can use her Ring Of Jumping to negotiate tricky platforms (the little minx is also rather adept at stealth

+ **DEMON STONE IS A MORE ENJOYABLE TITLE THAN THE TWO TOWERS, BUT THE REPETITIVE GAMEPLAY IS A SHAME**



They may look like they're posing for a Sears' catalogue, but these guys mean business.



When you're in Khelban Blackstaff's tower, inanimate objects come to life to help you with your goal.

FIRST LEVEL



Right from the very start, you'll immediately find yourself in the thick of it.



You'll soon start to get the hang of stringing combos together.

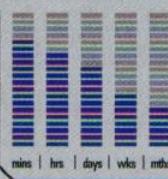


One of the problems is that it can be difficult to see what's going on.



Once you rescue Zhai you'll continue the game as the Dark Elf.

PLAYTIME



GOOD POINTS

- Fantastic visuals that perfectly capture the subject matter.
- Some truly superb set pieces.
- Loads of magical items and special abilities to buy.

**BAD POINTS**

- Extremely easy to complete.
- Lack of a two-player option is very frustrating.
- Gameplay is still far too basic for our liking.

**VERDICT****LOOKS**

Solid, well-detailed characters despite their undeniable unoriginality.

SOUND

Strong voice acting and some great orchestral work help build the atmosphere.

GAMEPLAY

Fun in the short term, but ultimately, a rather shallow genre entry.

LONG TERM

It won't take you more than a weekend to finish and there's little to draw you back.

OR YOU COULD TRY

LOTR: THE TWO TOWERS
Captures the spirit of the movie but forgets to add any substantial gameplay.



LOTR: THE RETURN OF THE KING
A much-welcomed, two-player option gives some much-needed depth.

77%

SUMMARY

Demon Stone is certainly heading in the right direction, but its reliance on fancy set pieces and dazzling visuals quickly reveals its rather shallow gameplay. It's also a pity that Stormfront wasn't able to incorporate some kind of Two-player mode, if only for a little extra depth.

79

PERCENT

>

<



The famous balding slap head appears as Kheiban Blackstaff, one of the Realms' most powerful wizards.



Although there are several stealth sections in the game, they are poorly implemented and add little to the overall package.

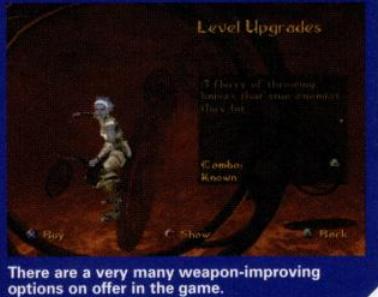


There's no question about the sheen-factor in Demon Stone but we can't but feel like we've seen it all before.

BUILD YOUR HERO

WEAPONS OF MASS EVOLUTION

Realising that a bloody huge sword is only going to get you so far in life, Stormfront Studios has added an extensive inventory of magical items and special abilities that can be used to enhance your already impressive heroes. Certain encounters with various bosses will reward you with specific magical items (like Rannack's Gauntlets Of Ogre Power, but it's also possible to buy powerful armour and even upgrade your main weapon. If that wasn't enough, you can also buy new abilities (utilised by pressing various button combos) that can turn you into a devastatingly powerful adventurer. If all this sounds like too much hassle though, simply use the handy Auto buy feature to instantly equip your trio of heroes with the best combinations possible.



There are a very many weapon-improving options on offer in the game.

and can hide herself in the environment's many shadows). Whilst the selection of each character is extremely fluid and never interrupts the flow of the game, it does mean that no two-player option is available. This is a real shame (and was also a big problem with *The Two Towers*.) Like the *Lord Of The Rings* franchise, the D&D license supports teamwork above everything else and the inability to use it in Demon Stone is a real disappointment that is sure to upset a great many people.

Fortunately though, the hectic onscreen action and reasonably intelligent support characters soon draw you back into the game and you'll simply go back to enjoying the frenetic battles you'll constantly find yourself in. Whilst they lack the sheer scale of the *Dynasty Warriors* series, the skirmishes in Demon Stone do a much better job of capturing the atmosphere of the battlefield than Koei has ever managed. Demon Stone's majestic, movie-

styled score, above average voice acting (courtesy of the likes of Michael Clarke Duncan and Patrick Stewart) and wonderfully constructed graphics engine constantly generate a feeling of excitement that is often lost in other titles.

Unfortunately, Demon Stone's epic battles are also its biggest failing. For all its multiple combos, dynamic looking spells and various magical items (which can all be handily purchased at the end of each level) the hack and slash gameplay is still extremely basic. Sure, there's several chances to use Zhai's stealth ability and some of the bosses require some deft character switching to defeat them, but most of the additions are often poorly implemented, or don't really gel that well. There's no doubt that Demon Stone is a more enjoyable title than *The Two Towers*, but the repetitive gameplay and lack of a strong license is unlikely to sell it to the masses. Sad, but oh so true. ■



Fans of the *Dungeons & Dragons* universe will no doubt be right at home with Demon Stone. It's a genuine immersion into a world populated with elves and drenched in magic.



SILENT HILL 4: THE ROOM

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: Konami | DEVELOPER: Konami Japan | PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: MA15+ | WEB SITE: www.konami.com



1 Player



Memory Card



Dual Shock 2

IN THE KNOW

- 11 levels of spooky goodness.
- Multiple endings.
- Inspired by the book *Coin Locker Babies*.

PRIOR FORM

The Room is the forth game in the hugely successful *Silent Hill* series and sticking firmly to the feel of the first three. The series peaked with the fans' firm favourite, *Silent Hill 2: Restless Dreams* and hasn't quite been able to reach the same level of quality since.



RELEASE DATE
OUT NOW

» IF THIS GAME WAS

A DVD BOXSET IT WOULD BE THE GHOSTBUSTER MOVIES

Because the first film is terrific in every way, but the second film is just such a massive let down. Still, great monsters though.

STAND OUT MOMENTS



Six levels down and things are getting very interesting indeed...



We wonder where we'll be off to next. Perhaps a terrifying dungeon.

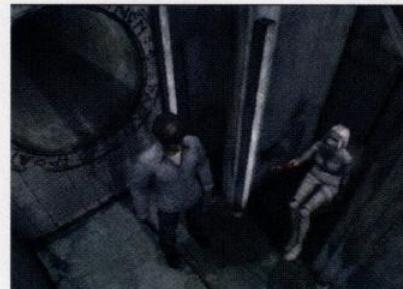
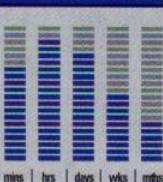


This creepy stairway must lead to the next, no doubt awesome level.



It's the first level again! Goddammit! It's just getting boring now.

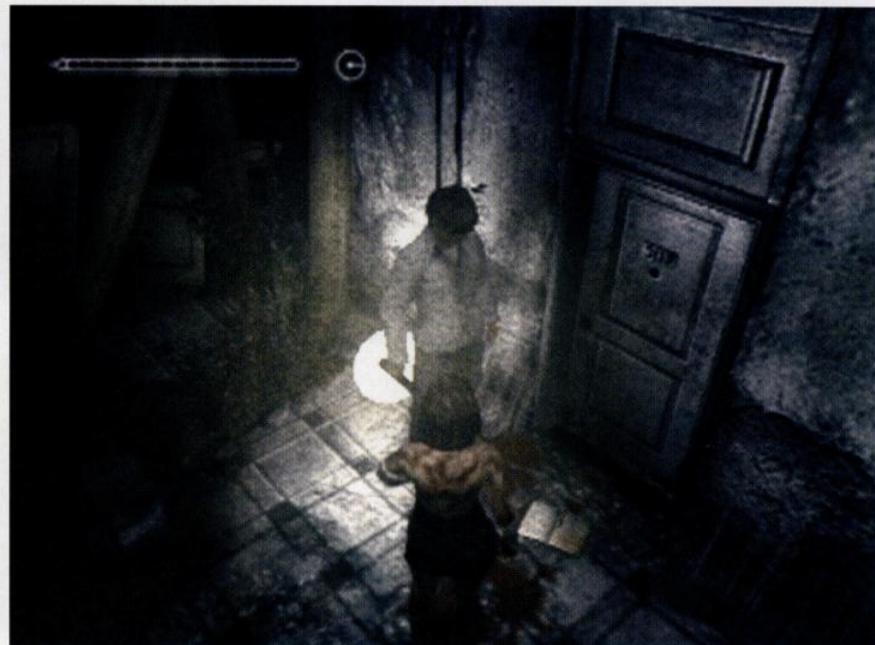
PLAYTIME



Charlie says, "Never accept sweets from blood-covered, stone women who hang around in toilets."



We hate it when stuff like this happens. It's always the evil zombie paintings that ruin our nights in.



"Before we go through with this, I have to tell you, it might get weird... I like it when the monsters... get involved... You think I'm strange now don't you?" "Baby, I've never been more aroused. Let's go." NB: Not actual dialogue from the game.

SILENT HILL 4: THE ROOM

IT'S GOOD TO GET OUT EVERY ONCE AND A WHILE

As strange as it may seem, everyone likes being scared. That's why the survival horror genre continues to grow ever stronger and has managed to reach the popularity levels that weaker fad-like genres could only ever dream about. The real skill, of course, is to keep scaring your audience well into your series of games and not let the frights become predictable and/or stale. As petrifying as a larger version of an extremely clichéd fear is at first, gamers the world over would soon tire of gasping whilst muttering "Oh no! A giant spider" followed

swiftly by "Stone the crows! It's a bleedin' great bat," or our personal favourite. "Gordon Bennett! It's a massive – yet strangely unthreatening – leech thing!" No, this would never do. So it's a good job our friends at Konami Japan have provided us with the *Silent Hill* series over the years. Not so much a trek through a catalogue of enlarged beasties that your girlfriend would squeal at as a hideous psychological nightmare that'll disturb you to the core. Now that's what we want to see.

The forth offering in the series sticks solidly to the atmosphere presented in the

first three games and places you firmly in a hellish situation with no idea of why or how it's happening. However, although the feel is similar, this time around, Konami has opted against placing you amongst the mist-covered streets of *Silent Hill* and has instead locked you up tight in your snug three-room apartment. Obviously this is no ordinary abode. Misshapen death-dealers seem to have locked you in, and your only chance of escape is to explore the even less inviting, monster-filled sub-worlds that a portal in your bathroom lead to. Come on – it's a classic tale.



This gal looks in a bad way. Still, it was nice of the monsters to patch her up a bit.



Like anyone would actually go through that door. Look at it – it's guaranteed to lead straight to death.



It's like the Emperor but with long hair. That's funny. Why's that funny? We don't know.

GOOD POINTS

- Being scared silly.
- The most hideous monsters ever to come out of your PS2.
- Plenty of clever surprises throughout the game.

**BAD POINTS**

- Repeating itself. Like this joke.
- Occasionally annoying inventory.
- The second half is really quite weak by comparison.

**VERDICT**

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

VIRTUAL DOMESTIC APPLIANCES

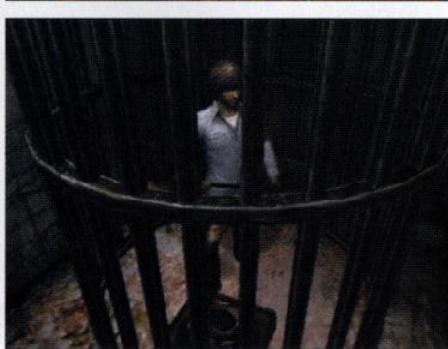
A noticeable difference between *The Room* and the previous *Silent Hill* titles is the first-person viewpoint you get whilst roaming around in your apartment. From inside your not-so-comfortable habitat you can spy on your neighbour through a peephole, save your game, switch inventory items or simply gaze longingly at the outside world through your bedroom window. You'll also need to use some of the objects in your apartment to solve puzzles in the sub-worlds, so it's a handy place to be indeed. It's definitely worth having a good search around your hellish home as well, as there are a fair few surprises waiting to be discovered.



Peeping into your neighbour's room's not really that interesting – but whatever turns you on...



The apartment has been fitted with the latest in security devices. Nobody's getting in – and nobody's getting out.



This change of environment isn't the only difference present. In a flash of genius, Konami has given the classic 'near bottomless pockets' inventory style a serious overhaul and you now find yourself with a much more limited carrying ability. To complement this new inventory – and to ensure you don't have to leave too many items behind – a storage box, not unlike the ones found in the *Resident Evil* games, can be found waiting for you inside your apartment. This works in exactly the same way as those *Resident Evil* chests and it will be more than happy to store all the items that you assume you won't need for a particular level until inevitably halfway through said level, you discover you do need them after all and have to traipse all the way back home to get them. Admittedly this can get annoying at times, and with each clip of ammo, extra weapon and health item taking up one of your much needed slots it's very easy to over pack and find yourself unable to pick up a crucial item or clue needed for the next puzzle.

Looks and sound wise, it's near impossible to fault *The Room*. Music has been used sparingly but to great effect and the subtle visual effects that occur when switching between realities is incredible. It really is as atmospheric as games come. Creepy demon paintings spring to life as you pass them on an elevator, people you've come to know as friends get brutally murdered and anyone who manages to take on one of the two-headed twin baby

THERE ARE FEW GAMERS OUT THERE THAT WON'T GET PLENTY OF PLAY TIME OUT OF THE ROOM

+ foes without panicking and making a complete mess of things is a better person than any of us.

Unfortunately – as always seems to be the case with titles that start out so well – there's a huge flaw. Although you may be enjoying the scares and violence throughout the first six levels of play, for some reason the second half of the game

is spread over the first five levels again, only with different puzzles and routes to find. Okay, you might finally figure out what was behind a few of the locked doors that were completely inaccessible the first time round and new enemies are thrown into your path but it still seems extremely cheap. Admittedly the other games in the series used similar retracing elements, but they really didn't rely on them to prolong gameplay as this seems to.

+ Ultimately though, there are few gamers out there that won't get plenty of enjoyment and play time out of *The Room*. Konami has really gone to town with the presentation and a good few cans of Pledge have been drained adding the necessary polish. It's a shame some of the effort wasn't pushed in the direction of the second half of the game. ■



That was the last time he did a Changing Rooms on 27 Cromwell Street.



Okay, so she's covered in blood, barely clothed, standing in a burnt down housing estate and she still needs a handbag?



Why do prisoners hold on to the bars in their cells? If you know the answer give us a bell on 07950223190.

LOOKS

Superb looking from start to finish, with some honestly imaginative monsters.

SOUND

A very good use of atmosphere-creating music and monster shuffling.

GAMEPLAY

The second half's a bit of a let down, but it's still a solid addition to the genre.

LONG TERM

Alternate ending might tempt a replay, but nothing else will.

OR YOU COULD TRY

FORBIDDEN SIREN
Reasonably impressive survival horror although quite irritating at times.



FATAL FRAME II
Eerie sequel to the based-on-a-true-story first game. Does the job.

SUMMARY

The Room is nearly a great title. At first it seems to have the whole package neatly tied up, but then the problems arrive and having to retrace your steps and solve new puzzles in areas that you thought you had already completed is a more than a little bit disappointing.

**PERCENT**

OBSCURE

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: Ubisoft | DEVELOPER: MC2-Micros |

PRICE: \$79.95 | RATING: MA15+ | WEB SITE: www.obscure-game.com



1-2 Player



Memory Card



Dual Shock 2

IN THE KNOW

Two-player survival horror but with a Buffy High School twist.

It's a bit like *The Faculty*.

It doesn't feature Josh Hartnett.

PRIOR FORM

This one is brought to you via the holy union of Ubisoft and MC2. We haven't been here before so there is no history. All we can write is that Ubisoft also publish the superior *Project Zero II*, which means they now control both ends of the survival horror quality spectrum.



RELEASE DATE
OUT NOW

» IF THIS
GAME WAS

A MOVIE IT WOULD
REALLY ONLY BE
WORTH RENTING

Because you read somewhere that a girl gets her chaps out in the final reel, then turns into a massive alien (*The Faculty*).

FIRST
LEVEL



Wire to unlock doors?
Okay, but only a few doors though, eh?



Jeepers creepers. It's all so atmospheric. Where did that guy go? Ooo!

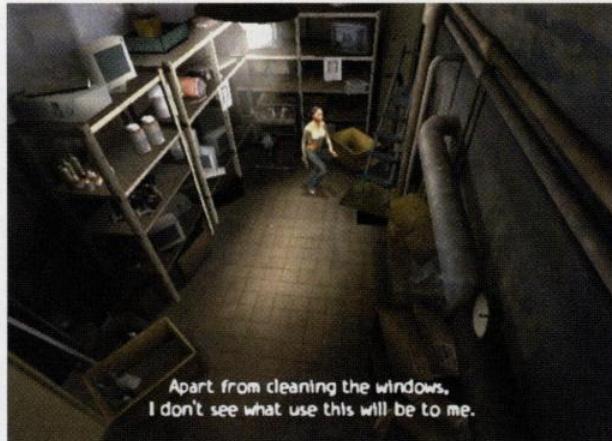
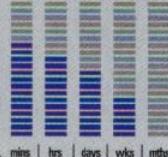


Obviously wire won't open this. Get some acid and a paper cup. WHAT?



Find both knobs, enter coordinate and open 20-year old puzzle theory.

PLAYTIME



Apart from cleaning the windows,
I don't see what use this will be to me.

If she was a member of the A-Team then this room would contain everything needed to fight Colonel Decker AND a massive alien-demon conspiracy. Think, woman, calm down and think.



Look – a magical portal that can take us back to the exact same time that *Resident Evil* was released. Quick, let's go get the original code and rip it to pieces before anyone notices.

OBSCURE

A HIGH SCHOOL HIGH TURNS OUT TO BE A LOW SCHOOL LOW

A camera floats around an American high school as punk-prancers SUM 41's *Still Waiting* ("So I'm still waiting/For this world to stop hating/Can't find a good reason/Can't find a hope to believe in" Hey, life's tough – get a helmet) does its best to underline the point that the teenage years, although only seven in total, are bully-ridden with fear and anxiety worth dwelling on. We see kids in the corridor, kids outside just hanging around. The camera fawns over the cool kids, freeze-frame as we are introduced to the story's main characters. You know the film. It's one in which the 'kids' are played by twenty-seven year old baby-faced beautiful people.

Then the game really starts as a character we'll refer to as 'The Jock'

decides to stay behind after basketball practice and shoot some more hoops. This is where you come in, taking direct control as you pick up a basketball and throw it in a hoop. You could do this for hours, but you, like the character you play, get bored and decide to go to the changing rooms to answer your mobile phone. A shadowy figure steals your belongings and scuttles off, never quite in sight. You go off to find out what the hell just happened.

Full marks for a decent opening with extra brownie points for ending this section with the hero disappearing. It's a common plot device, but it is handled with some style and it quickly identifies *Obscure* as trying something different from the usual *Alone In The Dark* haunted house vibe. Then the game starts as The Jock's

buddies go hunting for their buddy. They don't seem too concerned that they find ammunition, a gun and some tape just lying around. Combine the objects and you've got a gun/flashlight! Why would you need one? You're just looking around school for a mate. You don't know anything about the monsters he encountered. It's like the characters have been here before, and so have we. Let's go on. You find out that you can smash windows in the classrooms. Light pours in and forms a pool of radiance. Hmmm. What are the chances that you are going to encounter creatures pervious to light? Better odds than this being anything more than a rehashing of survival horror clichés, as it turns out.

Obscure is an odd one. It enables you to swap between characters where two can be in play at any one time, which is a novel addition unless you consider *Resident Evil 0* on the GameCube. The secondary character can even be

+ **FULL MARKS FOR A DECENT OPENING
WITH EXTRA BROWNIE POINTS FOR
ENDING IT WITH THE HERO DISAPPEARING** +



Self-referential gaming takes it too far, yet again. It's not useless, just needless. Okay, it is a bit useless. No, it's... gah!



Just look at this mess. It'll take more than a mop and a bucket of soapy water to get these stains out.



Right Moby, if that is your real name, how can you licence out every track on an album without feeling like a sell-out?

GOOD POINTS

- ⊕ The High School.
- ⊕ The first act is almost groovy.
- ⊕ We finally get to be popular in school, after all these years.

**BAD POINTS**

- ⊖ We've done this before, but better.
- ⊖ Repetitive speech can often get rather annoying.
- ⊖ Not as fun as going to a normal school. And we were bullied.



STOP FOLLOWING ME

GETTING OFF RESIDENT EVIL'S CLOUD

Any school that has reports on kids that mention how they can open almost any door with a piece of wire is okay in our book. Still, it's a nice way to find out your characters' skills and abilities. Close. So close to being something better. Here is an open letter to all developers out there. It's going to be subtle. LET *RESIDENT EVIL* GO. Just drop it, it worked well for a few games but you can't just keep on using these door/puzzle/monster situations and expect us to keep coming back. Especially when you can't top their ideas - or even match them. Why does the school need a fixed camera? Why? Obscure could have been a genuine shocker if it just left the tired and easily messed-up template alone... IN THE DARK. Aha! Ha!



Borrow from Hollywood, by all means. Just do it well...



Resident Evil 2 = God. Getting old, so how about some respect?



If you are going to build suspense then at least give the player the idea that they could be attacked at any time. Let's get that door open fast, shall we? Or not, it doesn't matter.



Objects have a real physical presence. That trolley over in yonder distance rolled there when we ran into it - which scared us a lot more than this evil beastie who is scared... of flashlights.

controlled by another pad should you have a friend and hate artificial intelligence. Then it forces you to strut around a school searching for clues and puzzles like you've seen in games since the Nineties. Its logic is also somewhat illogical. The classic 'this door is locked' problem often being negated by your ability to smash a window and reach for the handle. Now that we like as it makes sense. Then you find a door that is locked, yet can be opened by the game's own 'master of unlocking' using some wire. Other locks can't. Some even need rusty keys for rusty doors. You find a padlocked door. The solution? Carry acid from a chemistry room in a paper cup. Not a glass vial, or any of the other more

suitable objects bolted onto the background. No, if you did that you wouldn't have to get back to the padlock before the acid eats through the cup, and where's the tension in that? Thank you *The Secret Of Monkey Island* (1990).

So an excellent premise quickly descends into nonsense as you find yourself collecting objects, and taking said objects from one location to another through areas occasionally invaded by space-demon-things whose design varies from H P Lovecraft's gothica, to creatures more suitable to a Tim Burton remake of *The Yellow Submarine*. Shoot them, bash them, and trap them in light! Get on to the next mundane puzzle. This map has two holes in it, you picked up one of the

necessary knobs a while ago so put one in - now get the other and twist these dials so they point to a country. Seem to... remember... doing this... action in every adventure game since *Future Wars* on the Amiga (1989). Gah!

As a damning indictment of the mind-numbingly futile existence of teenagers in American high schools, *Obscure* is still a boring and almost totally uninspiring game. The initial premise and use of cinematic pace is nothing but a drunken flirtation with a situation that could have been, and it won't be long before you find yourself playing the videogaming equivalent of a milk monitor stuck in a special class for the lactose intolerant. During a thunderstorm. ■



Aliens who can be killed by light - now there's a weakness. Hang-on... not casting... shadows. Damn it! We're vampires.



The above cut-scene is pointless because we have already discovered that we can break windows - see left.



Of course there is nothing wrong with this behavior, look at the ancient Greeks. Anyway, it's society's crime - not ours.



VERDICT

LOOKS

Hey, you can push the chairs around! Awkward animation, shiny floors/flaws.

SOUND

Repetitive quips, a creepy choir and some skate punk. Quickly gets annoying.

GAMEPLAY

Does well in reminding you that real life is actually really quite good.

LONG TERM

If you can be arsed to complete it once, you're mad enough to do it again.

OR YOU COULD TRY



ALONE IN THE DARK
Gun/torch, monster combo that's no *Resident Evil*, but has some merits.

72%



FATAL FRAME II
A genuinely unnerving horror experience. Features twin Japanese schoolgirls. Yes!

82%

SUMMARY

Survival horror in an American high school. Excellent. Too bad that's as interesting as things get. What could have been a top take on the teen horror movie quickly descends into something that's a lot more like work than it is fun. Yet another 'coulda been'.

60
PERCENT

TOCA RACE DRIVER 2

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: Codemasters | DEVELOPER: In-house | PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: G | WEB SITE: www.codemasters.co.uk



1-8 Player



Memory Card



Dual Shock 2

IN THE KNOW

- Online play for up to eight players.
- 15 different motor racing styles including convertibles, classic cars and Formula Fords.
- Over 52 circuits including Donington Park and Laguna Seca.



RELEASE DATE OUT NOW

» IF THIS GAME WAS

A CAR IT WOULD BE
A COURTESY CAR
WHILE YOURS IS
HAVING ITS MOT

It'd be much better than yours. You get used to the gloriously responsive handling and astonishing speed and then have to climb back into your hunk of junk after the work is done. Which is really quite jarring.

FIRST LEVEL



The entrance of rival racers really does hot things up.



They're at the front, while we languish somewhere at the back.

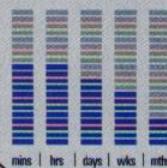


A bit of attempted vehicular-manslaughter later and...



...they're still there. They're pretty damn good you see.

PLAYTIME



The onscreen map, bottom left, is a very handy addition. Sadly the Formula Fords are a pain in the ass to drive.



The Land Rovers are great fun to drive, but we remain sceptical of their supposed 'realistic physics'.

V8 SUPER-CARS 2

Picture a small child, at least for the purposes of this review. You can forget about it once you've read this. V8 Supercars 2's multiple vehicle approach to motor racing makes it a Kellogg's Variety Pack of breakfast cereals. Hungry child in need of sustenance opens said packet only to find one packet of Coco Pops, one Honey Nut Loops, one Rice Bubbles, one Corn Flakes and four packets of All Bran. The kid will enjoy the first four, but is likely to projectile vomit the All Bran as soon as it hits the palette. The moral of this story is not 'don't buy Kellogg's' but 'V8 is a mixed bag'.

V8's unique narrative approach to racing games is still here: you (or in our case, Jan Modrak of Czechoslovakia) are on a quest to be the best racing driver in the world. The further you get, the more money you make, sponsors you gain, and rivals you accrue. The more vehicles you have to master too.

For the sake of anyone still

picturing a malnourished child, you'll get to grips with Seat Leon - the Corn Flakes of this metaphor - tasty, dependable, if a little plain; Land Rovers - Coco Pops - a huge hit of flavour, get sickly after a while; Formula Fords - Honey Nut Loops - great at first, get soggy quick; Global GT Lights sports cars - Rice Bubbles - exciting until you realise they're actually quite bland. As for the Super Trucks, Rally and Stock Cars - they're the All Bran - pretty unappetising. Trucks are painfully slow, and simply dull to drive, while the Stock Cars are frustratingly prone to 360 degree spins. The rally sections seem to be ripped wholesale from a past instalment of Colin McRae, right down to Nicky Grist's pace notes, but have been broken in the process - the cars now handle like

A GREAT FIBRE PROVIDER

lawnmowers powered by jet turbines - interminably skittish with a sensation of speed greater even than the Stockcar sections.

In fact we overwhelmingly get the feeling that V8 has been stitched together from any racing game scraps Codemasters had lying around the office - the Land Rovers, arguably the most enjoyable vehicles, impart a furiously quick and aggressive rallying vibe yet strangely lack any sense of weight during collisions and when jumping, a million miles away from the believable weight and rigidity of the Trucks. Unsurprisingly then, TOCA only satisfies when the racing can be suitably gripping and indeed gruelling. It's just a shame there's so much All Bran to chew on. (You can forget the kid now.) ■

+ **UNSURPRISINGLY THEN, TOCA ONLY SATISFIES WHEN OFFERING UP ITS STRONGEST SUITS** +



Here's the first rival introduced in the game. He's a good driver, but a little too flirty for our liking.



Stock Car races would be nothing but racing around an oval if it weren't for the bad handling.



Team owner Scottie decked in plaid shirt - a cowboy outfit for the boss of a cowboy outfit.



VERDICT

VERDICT

LOOKS

Low on pizzazz but fair from ugly. Nice to see it move at 60 frames per second.

SOUND

Fairly unspectacular, though the aircraft-like noise of the Stock Cars is effective.

GAMEPLAY

Some vehicles handle well and are highly rewarding. Others don't.

LONG TERM

Career mode is engaging and Online Land Rover races are an intriguing prospect.

OR YOU COULD TRY



An inconceivably good score for an inconceivably good driving game.

96%



Despite superficial similarities this feels miles better than V8 2.

84%

SUMMARY

Overall, a fairly enjoyable jamboree of racing, marred by certain classes offering all the entertainment value of a wake. The much-vaunted physics seem strangely absent on a few of the vehicles too, but there is still plenty here to squeeze some fun out of.

73
PERCENT

CRISIS ZONE

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: Sony | DEVELOPER: Namco | PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: M15+ | WEB SITE: www.namco.com



1-2 Player

Memory Card

Dual Shock 2

RELEASE DATE
OUT NOW

» IF THIS GAME WAS

A COWBOY IT WOULD BE WILLIAM MUNNY

Slow and inaccurate, all gunfights will do now is remind him that once upon a Western he could kill six men with three bullets. He always was lucky when it came to killing folk.

STAND OUT MOMENTS



We're waiting for men that will take far too long to kill.



This man took far too long to kill. It wasn't fun at all.

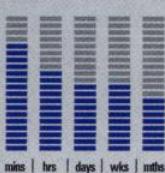


This man also took far too long to kill. It wasn't fun at all.



This man will take far too long to kill. We can guarantee it.

PLAYTIME



“Hey, let's tail away all the fun by adding more health bars to deplete!” Shut the *** up Namco.



“There's so much going on at times it can become a might confusing. It sure looks pretty though.”

CRISIS ZONE

LIKE PERFORMING SURGERY USING A SHOULDER MOUNTED CROP SPRAYER

If you're finding it hard to remember the last time you gleamed any satisfaction from drenching a man in machine-gun fire then you're very much like us. Smoking a dude with one shot to the head takes skill and shows certain panache. Unless you are Fifty Cent, bullets hurt real bad and don't generally aid a rapping career. *Time Crisis* is about taking down felons quickly using a pistol and your cunning ability to duck. Replacing a single shot pistol with something more automatic, explosive or – in the case of the flamethrower – flammable, is the quickest way to remove this fun factor and replace it with something that's a whole lot more mundane.

These terrorists have decided that hijacking planes and flying them into the most prominent two fingers of a city's skyline is for wimps. They've got lots of guns and the kind of body armour that can be represented by a health bar. Screw cunning

plans; they are taking out England (yes, merry olde England) using soul-glow suits and improbable full-body protection. Being attacked by terrorists can be a drag. It's even worse if you are denied the sheer thrill of the quick-draw one-shot kill because they've been to The Gap during a Kevlar sale. Grrr.

Make no mistake; *Crisis Zone* is the arcade game in your home. Years ago this very idea

the amusingly destructive scenery here, however, are all garnish to some particularly unsavoury meat. Let us not forget that *Time Crisis* was essentially a fast-paced shooting gallery. Taking an entire room of terrorists out with single shots – one bullet per bad guy – was the fun. That's what gave the thrill of the kill and the desire to improve in speed and accuracy. That has gone bye, bye.

Crisis Zone is the proverbial over-egged pudding. The

WHERE YOU ONCE FELT LIKE BILLY THE KID, YOU NOW FEEL MORE LIKE ALLEN TITCHMARSH

would be enough to jack our mouths into a smile. Well, the dream of having arcade quality games at home has become a reality and, in the case of *Burnout 3*, you can now play greater arcade games in your living room than you'd find in the back streets of Weston-Super-Mare. All the presentation and the 'insert credit' enticement, the heavily detailed backgrounds and

addition of a bulletproof riot shield for ducking purposes is welcome, as is the way you can blast the enemy as the game pulls you on the invisible rails that separate scenes. Unfortunately, the excitement in killing is all but neutered. Where you once felt like Billy the Kid, you now feel more like Allen Titchmarsh watering a particularly violent garden. ■



Forget playing "six shots... or only five" since you now have a rather dull machine-gun.



Next from Namco: 'Fish In A Barrel' – a game where you shoot fish, in a barrel.



Using your special move is a sure-fire way to boost your kill count.

IN THE KNOW

- It's all about bigger, more destructive weapons.
- Only a few bad dudes will succumb to just one shot.
- It's by far the worst game in the series!



VERDICT

LOOKS

Highly destructive environments, slick, arcade-quality styling.

SOUND

Bang, bang, boom, boom. Nothing we haven't dealt with before.

GAMEPLAY

Hold aim over bad man, shoot at bad man, bad man falls down. Yawn.

LONG TERM

You're not going to want to go back to get a higher accuracy rating.

OR YOU COULD TRY



TIME CRISIS 2
Better-than-perfect conversion of the Namco arcade game.
90%



TIME CRISIS 3
Although damned hard, there is plenty here to warrant a purchase.
90%

SUMMARY

Namco have taken the shooting gallery and have decided to take away the fun of shooting. With no drums it just ain't rock 'n' roll, and with no one-shot kills it ain't *Time Crisis*. It's just silly. Here's to hoping that Namco learn from its mistakes and backs the hell up.

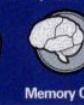
65

PERCENT

VIEWTIFUL JOE

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: Capcom | DEVELOPER: In-house | PRICE: \$59.95
RATING: G8+ | WEB SITE: www.capcom.com



1 players

Memory Card

Dual Shock 2

IN THE KNOW

Rock-hard, old-school, two-dimensional gameplay.

Unlock and play as Dante from *Devil May Cry*.

And they said 2D was dead...

PRIOR FORM

Recent titles like the entirely pointless *Resident Evil Outbreak* certainly won't have done Capcom any favours but there's always hope – so long as it continues to support interesting new games such as *Viewtiful Joe* and *Gregory Horror Show*, there'll always be a Capcom-shaped place in our hearts.

REVIEW
R

RELEASE DATE
OUT NOW

» IF THIS
GAME WAS

A SWEET, IT'D BE
THE WORLD'S
BIGGEST, SWEETEST
STICK OF ROCK

Do we even have to
say anything here?
Thought not...

STAND OUT
MOMENTS



Oh look – a crowd of
stupid enemies ready
for an ass kicking.



First, slow down time
to set the mood and
all that.

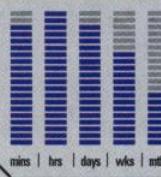


Then zoom in and get
some bad guy knees
a-knockin'.



Finally, unleash the
killer blow, point at
them and laugh.

PLAYTIME



Once you unlock Dante, things get a whole lot easier. He does have guns, after all. Is that cheating? Hell no! After all you have to do to get him, guns are the least Capcom could give you...



The biggest bonuses come from juggling enemies that you've made fools of. Just like in real life.

VIEWTIFUL JOE

WOW – MAYBE BULLET TIME ISN'T JUST A LAME GIMMICK AFTER ALL

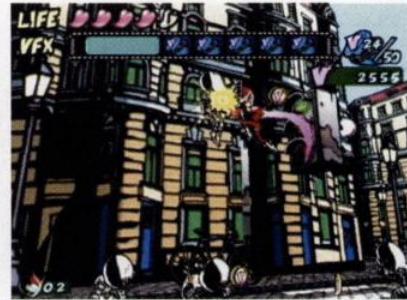
Have you ever thrown a controller out of sheer frustration at a videogame? You have? It's nothing to be ashamed of. Why, right here in the office, there's a peripheral graveyard for all the poor pads that have been slung across the room and ended their flight in a less-than-satisfactory state. We do, however, have a word of warning. If you are one of these people that loses their proverbial rag easily, picking up a copy of *Viewtiful Joe* is probably not going to be good for your sanity. For a start, it coaxes you into playing on the harder difficulties – Normal mode is called 'Kids' while the insanely tough Hard mode is 'Adult'. Not quite as patronizing as *R-Type Final*'s 'Baby' mode perhaps but still very cheeky. Sure, on both settings (as well

as a new, even easier skill level – obviously the game was deemed too hardcore for the mass market as it was) you'll start out okay but while it'll be a few levels in before Kids mode gets challenging – you'll be winding up for an almighty DualShock2 pitch by the end of the first level. And those things cost \$50 a pop, so don't do anything stupid...

The concept of *Viewtiful Joe* is a simple one. When his girlfriend Sylvia is drawn into a movie, Joe has to go in to save her and following in the footsteps of his hero Captain Blue, he's granted a series of powers that should help his cause no end. Abuse your powers and Joe loses them temporarily while he recharges which, at the wrong time, could spell your end. From there, it's basically a case of dealing with a

series of challenges per level as quickly and stylishly as you can (like *Devil May Cry*, each attack is scored) and at the end of a section, you're awarded a rank and the appropriate bonuses. If there was ever any question hanging over Capcom's prowess, *Viewtiful Joe* lays it to rest with some of the most beautiful and well-designed visuals you'll find in a game today and is also one of those rare titles where the game's soundtrack supports and enhances the on-screen action.

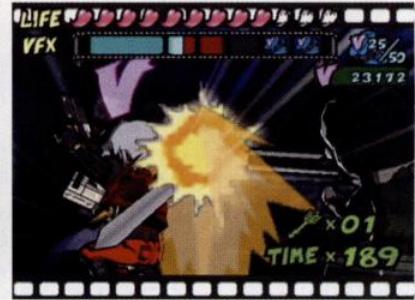
Perhaps the strongest area of *Viewtiful Joe* is that you can actually tell that every section is possible (even if they aren't always particularly friendly) and that it wouldn't be that much work to get really good at dispatching foes. With the first hour



Unconstrained by the realms of realism, it's not unusual for Joe to bust phat combos and hover indefinitely. What a guy.



Using zoom in conjunction with your time control, VFX is a surefire way to take out hordes of goons at a time. Rock.



Your most powerful attack is activated by zooming in after a dodge. Aint nobody gonna be alive after the ensuing pose...

GOOD POINTS

- Stylish visuals, and when we say 'stylish', we mean, well, stylish.
- Ingeniously designed levels and plenty of puzzles.
- Combat is absolutely superb.

BAD POINTS

- Frustratingly tough in places.
- Not the longest game ever.
- Begins to retrace old ground towards the end.

**VERDICT****LOOKS**

A polished and well-themed visual style does the game very proud.

SOUND

Retro-esque tunes set off by some great dialogue and spot effects.

GAMEPLAY

A classic 'easy to learn, difficult to master' game. Sublime stuff.

LONG TERM

It's not that long but you'll probably go through it several times.

OR YOU COULD TRY

KLONOA 2: VELIA OF LUNACEA

Namco's cutest offering is certainly one of the PS2's unsung heroes.

87%



POLAROID PETE

Another happy platformer pumped full of a similar visual energy.

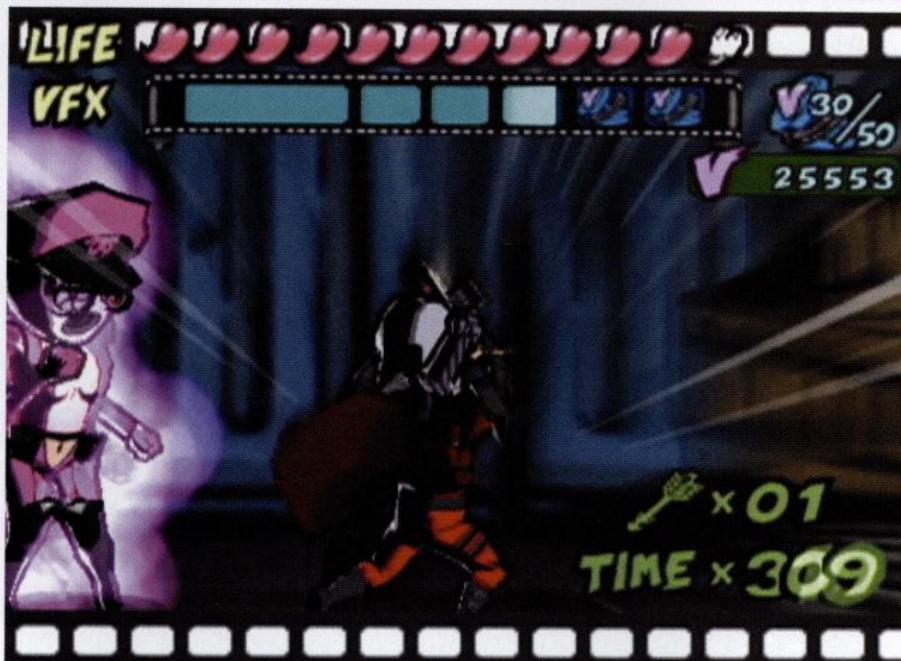
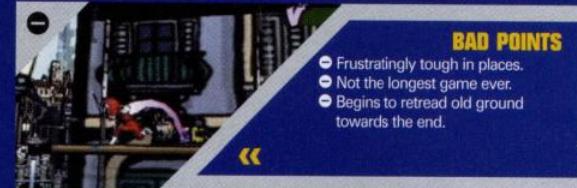
80%

SUMMARY

Viewtiful Joe is virtually unparalleled on the PlayStation 2 in terms of solidity and ingenuity – there's a great deal of side-scrolling fun to be had for those of a more patient disposition, and for just twenty of your pounds, it really is one not to be missed. Now say thank you to the nice Mr Capcom.

87

PERCENT



Most of the levels are broken down into twenty or so mini-objectives – fight a crowd of buffoons or solve a puzzle to earn a key and leave in the quickest time possible. Perform really well and you just might get deemed 'Viewtiful'. Oh, the honour.

so, you'll go from a few punches and kicks here and there to slow-mo flurries and score multipliers which not only help clear levels quicker but also enable you to upgrade more abilities and such between stages. One annoyance is that not all of these checkpoints offer save points and, especially later in the game, a chance to record your progress is a rare commodity indeed. Still, you're able to shop for extra health (an absolute necessity on higher difficulties) and moves that will make your life easier – with unlimited continues, you'll keep racking up Viewtifuls as you attempt sections, so eventually you'll be able to upgrade yourself out of a rather tricky situation. Maybe.

We've also been impressed by just how well the time control aspects have been integrated into the main game rather than just being another follower of the Cult Of Bullet Time. As well as helping you in battle, many of the game's puzzles and secrets require some real lateral thinking using Joe's skills. Fast forward to fill up a

water reservoir quicker and reach a higher ledge, slow down time to make bomb blasts far more potent and bring down airborne enemies. Even some of the more action-based puzzles will call on one or more of your powers. Levels themselves are cleverly put together to entertain and offer various ways of tackling problems for the gamer

MOST DEATHS CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO HUMAN ERROR AND IT'S THIS THAT MAKES JOE SUCH A JOY

with more initiative while the bosses are some of the best we've seen – tricky-yet-learnable attack patterns and opportunity windows make for some tense and rewarding encounters... this really is a fine example of that seemingly lost treasure that can only be described as 'pure gameplay'.

Ultimately, the difficulty and need to play through large sections of levels again should your allotted quota of lives expire are the only real problems that can be pointed out with *Viewtiful Joe*. It sets down the ground

rules early on and adheres to them with a wonderful strictness that many games are terrified to do – while you might be sent back to the start from time to time, you'll often realize what your problem was right away and most likely be able to deal with it second time around. To this end, most deaths can be attributed to human error

and it's this that makes Joe such a joy. So many games are made artificially difficult for the sake of it, letting CPU opponents take more damage, counter more easily, or even be aware of you without having to 'see' you. It's so nice to see a game offer a genuine challenge for once that there's no way we can't recommend *Viewtiful Joe* to any gamer who thinks they have the necessary skills. But if your controller suffers a slight mishap and is propelled through the red mist, don't say we didn't warn you, okay? ■

DEVIL MAY CRY, BABY!

WHY SHOULD JOE HAVE ALL THE FUN?

The biggest change to have been made since *VJ* hit the GameCube just over a year ago is the inclusion of a new playable character and Capcom obviously didn't have to look very far to find a worthy candidate. Wise-cracking to his last and never afraid to dish out a Super Size portion of pain, *Devil May Cry*'s Dante

gets his own moves, story and abilities which actually make the game a lot easier. Well, he does have guns after all but there's a catch (c'mon... there always a catch) – you'll have to finish the game once before you get your hands on him and his fantastic style. So yeah, good luck with that.



KILLZONE

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: Sony | DEVELOPER: Guerrilla | PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: MA15+ | WEB SITE: www.killzoneps2.com



1-2 players



Memory Card



Dual Shock 2



1-16 Online

IN THE KNOW

- Sean Pertwee provides the voice for the half-Helghast, half-human Hakka.
- The City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra rocks!
- The weapon sound effects were created with a stapler.

PRIOR FORM

In the short space of two videogame releases, Guerrilla has earned itself a reputation for pushing the PS2 to its limits, first in the very respectable *Shellshock: Nam '67* (83%) and now with its most accomplished work, *Killzone*.

RELEASE DATE
OUT NOW

» IF THIS GAME WAS

A VETERAN, IT'D BE A VIETNAM VETERAN

Because *Nam* was so haunting vets can't help but talk about anything other than battle after battle. That's all there is... no respite.

FIRST LEVEL



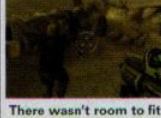
The action kicks off in the trenches. It's like the Somme, only trivial.



The Helghast's red eyes burn through the thick gloom of the trench.



Being trench warfare it gets you used to ducking from bullets.



There wasn't room to fit a war poem in here. Shame really.

PLAYTIME



This is the archetypal *Killzone* screenshot: simple, colour-diluted, atmospheric as hell and centred around a huge gun that sounds like a never-ending stream of bricks being poured over a cobbled street.



On a grassy knoll the giant guns sound like a storm would from the comfort of your conservatory.

KILLZONE

KILL KILL KILL KILL KILL OR BE KILLED

Killzone represents a major landmark in Sony's online plans – a high profile FPS to lend it legitimacy. As is our policy, we'll be reviewing the online component in **play™ Network** next month, so we get to see just how *Killzone* will cope with up to 16 players online in 'real' conditions, which means playing against the public. It will also give the public a chance to become accustomed to *Killzone*, and this in our opinion is important, because *Killzone* takes a while to acclimatise to. It's more *Enemy At The Gates* than *Rambo*, tortoise than hare, *Rainbow Six* than *Halo*. Sorry about that.

In military lingo a 'killzone' is an area of heavy casualties in a military conflict, and while you'll amass a killing field of the Jin-

Roh-styled Helghast, make no mistake – the four man team that comprises the game's playable characters and your fellow ISA squads that help you wage war are in their killzone. For a future setting facilitating space travel to colony planets, Guerrilla's vision of future warfare is decidedly old fashioned – no aliens, no laser fire, no green blobs, but plenty of bullets, trenches and rubble-strewn industrial environments.

At first the game may well test your patience as much as it is obviously testing the PS2's hardware – the Helghast are quite content to absorb nigh-on a magazine of bullets into their body armour before expiring. This makes headshots a priority, but with enemy troops often beetle-sized on the horizon, the player must get used to

engaging the zoomed view that many of the weapons feature for marksman aim; ditch that hand-jam encrusted old DualShock and invest in a brand new one – *Killzone*'s insistence on ballistic accuracy really shows up the dead zone that develops at the centre of your DualShock's analog stick.

Running and gunning is a fruitless exercise in *Killzone* – Helghast troops will finish you off in a matter of seconds. In fact, the antithesis of the *Doom* model is on offer – cover must be found, be it a bunker or pile of rubble and enemies picked off methodically from relative safety and with the support of AI allies. If this sounds staid on paper, in execution it is anything but. Take, for example, the slums – fire fights start at ground level with Helghast attacking from the vantage point of a balcony. From cover the Helghast are picked off, before you and your troops take the position only to be flanked by more Helghast. Another vicious fire fight utilising the dash function to scurry from one area of cover to the next, drives them back into



The muzzle flare would remind us of a dragon with a cough were we to ever have seen one.



Remember, the biggest danger in war isn't death, but falling in love with really ugly people.

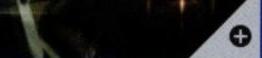


If God cracked his knuckles, we're sure it would sound like this gun.

GOOD POINTS

- Beautiful environments with a wonderfully muted colour palette.
- Awesome sound effects.
- Features Sean Pertwee's crackling tone of voice.

»



+

BAD POINTS

- Troop AI doesn't stand up to close scrutiny.
- A knackered DualShock is a serious hindrance to success.
- Split screen Two-player mode's a disappointment.

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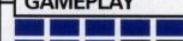
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**VERDICT****LOOKS**

A wonderfully realised vision: bleak, brutal, yet occasionally beautiful.

SOUND

The cacophony of war as accompanied by an orchestra. Awesome.

GAMEPLAY

Total war boiled down to nothing more than two forces separated by rubble.

LONG TERM

Really, the game's longevity hinges inevitably on decent online performance.

OR YOU COULD TRY**RAINBOW SIX**Like *Ocean's Eleven*, but with small teams of gun-loving commandos.

85%

**HELL SHOCK: NAM '67**

Guerrilla's other baby, and possibly the best Nam game on PS2.

83%

SUMMARY

While Killzone's overall remit is as narrow as its trenches, it benefits greatly, especially in terms of aesthetics, from this focus.

Meanwhile, the gun fights are extremely tense and atmospheric – and as they should be, as this is a game that relies on them for entertainment.

84

PERCENT



Just look at the size of this gun. It's friggin' huge, and fittingly powerful. It, like all ammunition-deliverers in *Killzone*, also makes a great noise, like a train going down some stairs at high speed.

a waiting allied troop. It's intense, thanks in no small part to the most convincing architecture modelled in any PS2 game – the level design to and froing the advantage of battle between attacker and defender providing cover to troops in one direction but dangerous exposure on another.

As the plot develops the game's A-Team (Templar, Luger, Rico and Hakha) is formed – the player rarely without a support group of three AI soldiers to take the sting out of encountering enemy battalions.

Occasionally you'll stumble across a number of ISA troops engaging Helghast and it's times like this that *Killzone* really succeeds in creating heated conflict – both allied and enemy troops seeking to flank the opposition. When your crosshair is trained on the Helghast it's highly convincing. On closer inspection it's much less so – both allied and Helghast troops dawdle around when you're not in direct contact. It's on one hand effective, putting

the onus where it should be – on player decisiveness – but there's no real intelligence in the AI.

Living up to its name, *Killzone* shuns peripheral tasks – only three or so switches need be pressed throughout the whole of the game – puzzles are non-existent. Instead the player's experience is aiming,

MORE ENEMY AT THE GATE THAN RAMBO, TORTOISE THAN HARE, RAINBOW SIX THAN HALO. SORRY ABOUT THAT

squeezing the trigger and finding cover. Every facet of the game accentuates this – bullets fizz past your ear warning you of nearby harm; in fact the audio throughout is exemplary – the sound emitted from weapons when reloading especially – gas hissing on certain weapons as spent rounds are ejected, others just slamming metal on metal. Cha Ching. It's hard to believe they were created using a stapler.

While it can be easy to miss them, the game is also rife with touches of graphical flair – the brilliantly designed weapons are obvious, but the delicate cherry blossoms of the park and the sheer density of flora and fauna aren't so immediately apparent. On the other hand, the blustering sea of the docks is arresting. Move over *Hitman*

Contracts – this is the best water on PS2. While the frame rate occasionally dips and pop-up hasn't been totally eradicated, *Killzone* looks stunning. However, the total focus on fire fights means that anyone who doesn't relish the thought of scrapping for territory, yearning for puzzles, switches, vehicles, or woe-betide, aliens, should look elsewhere. We'll be seeing everyone with a yen for the crucible of war online. ■

THE SPLITS

For anyone without a broadband connection, two-player split screen is the epitome of social gaming. While the omission of a two-player Co-op mode rankles, the effect of squeezing two views of *Killzone*'s world onto one screen depresses – a less than Ribena frame rate making aiming a chore, the detail of *Killzone*'s beauty mired. Furthermore, duking it out in any of the modes – be it Death Match, Team Death Match,

Domination, Supply Drop, Assault or Defend and Destroy feels surprisingly alien even to *Killzone* veterans – the lack of peripheral vision has a dramatic effect on a player's ability to spot potential threats and targets. Furthermore, the cramped view of the terrain can make it difficult to navigate for anyone not familiar with the levels, especially considering the game's lack of a jump command. An accomplished Online mode would be fitting recompense.



When you split the screen in half, the work the PS2 has to do noticeably doubles.

MORTAL KOMBAT: DECEPTION

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: Midway | DEVELOPER: In-house |
PRICE: \$99.95 | RATING: MS15+ | WEB SITE: www.midway.com



1-2 Player

Memory Card

Dual Shock 2

IN THE KNOW

24 playable characters to fight your way to victory with.

Two fatalities per character... double the last game's tally.

Hundreds of unlockables.

PRIOR FORM

This is the sixth game in the hugely successful and controversial *Mortal Kombat* series. Starting out in 1991, these games have provided more blood and guts than any other series ever, whilst simultaneously becoming one of Midway's biggest franchises.



RELEASE DATE
OUT NOW

IF THIS GAME WAS

A CHILDHOOD TOY, IT WOULD BE A BOGLIN

Great fun for a while, but you soon realise it's the same as all the others but with a different face.

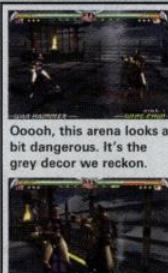


Some moves will probably catch you out so many times you'll start to cry, and some you'll see coming from a mile off so often it'll make you yawn.



Nightwolf used to be cool, now he's just plain cold. Still, that's what happens when you take on Shredder... sorry, we mean Sub-Zero.

FIRST LEVEL



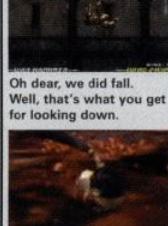
Ooooh, this arena looks a bit dangerous. It's the grey decor we reckon.



It's very high up, isn't it? Hope we don't fall, hope we don't fall, hope we...

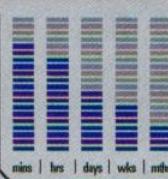


Oh dear, we did fall. Well, that's what you get for looking down.



Wow, we never knew blood was burgundy. How very odd.

PLAYTIME



MORTAL KOMBAT: DECEPTION

MIDWAY PRESENTS THE NEXT IN THE BLOODY SERIES

Anyone who wandered into an arcade during the early Nineties would probably have been there for one reason and for one reason only – to witness everyone's favourite batch of Kombatants meet ridiculously over-the-top, gore-filled ends at the hand of some incredibly nimble-fingered youngster, who amazingly seemed to have no notable skill other than that of hammering furiously away at six buttons when given a certain cue. Finish him.

It's a phrase that's equally feared, respected and anticipated in the gaming world and one that always prompts emotion. Be it the panic you feel as you painfully pummel out your fatality sequence for the third time, knowing that

in a matter of seconds your would-be victim will seemingly mock you by flopping to the arena floor like a damp vacuum bag. Or the hope that washes over you when you realise that there's a fair chance that your new-found enemy's over-tired thumb will simply under perform and you may be able to hold your head a little higher and claim your own personal mini-victory due to his momentary lack of skill. It was tense stuff.

With the fact that the series is best known for this 'Fatality ritual' firmly in mind, it was somewhat of a shock to find that the last game, *Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance*, was bold enough to limit each character to just one Fatality apiece. Worse still, while it was busy chopping out the bits we wanted to keep, it managed to also do away with

all Pit Fatalities and all the amusing bonus finishers that brightened up the previous titles. *Deadly Alliance* was a fairly good title as it went, but many were a little miffed at the blatant lack of what they had come to expect from the series and cursed Midway – and rightly so...

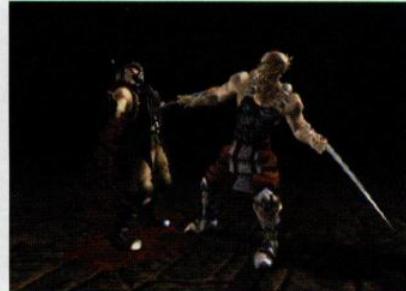
Thankfully, it seems Midway has cleared the congealed blood from its cauliflower ears and has acted on these complaints. *Mortal Kombat: Deception* is the result. Each character is now armed with a slightly more impressive two Fatalities each, but there are many more ways in which to deliver the final blow apart from these. Pit Fatalities make a welcome comeback and can now be made use of at any time during a match, as can the many Stage Fatalities that have been included, which manage to enhance each bout and increase the tension. New, more powerful weapons have been placed in the arenas, which will improve the power of your blows should you be the first fighter to get your

IT SEEMS MIDWAY HAS CLEARED THE CONGEALED BLOOD FROM ITS EARS AND ACTED ON THE COMPLAINTS

Back in 1991, who'd have guessed that this would have been the best part of a *Mortal Kombat* sequel?



Apparently Kasparov tried his luck with *Chess Kombat*, and was crap. Does that tell you something?



Fans of blood will be pleased to see the extra Fatalities that are on offer. Anyone got a mop?

GOOD POINTS

- Lots of blood, and by that we mean lots of blood.
- Old characters have returned to spice things up.
- Puzzle Kombat rules.

**BAD POINTS**

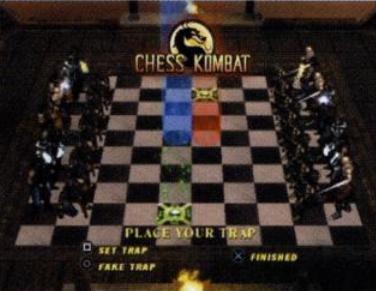
- Some of the Fatalities are nothing short of rubbish.
- Some of the newer characters have disappeared.
- Chess Kombat bites.

**IT'LL ALL END IN TEARS**

One of the new elements that *Deception* is offering is the Stage Fatalities. No matter whose way the battle is going, an impromptu end can come by using the surrounding area to your advantage. Whether it's a wall of bone-crushing cogs, a portal to the Netherworld or a hulking great gargoyle, a well-timed punch in the boat race will send your hapless victim into a world of pain. Obviously this works both ways, so learning where these moves can take place and avoiding the 'death spots' is crucial if you want your body to remain intact for the duration of a fight.



This is painful. Fact.



You remember that bit in *Chess* where you lay a glowing trap? No? Funny that.



Mileena adopts her War Hammer stance. We call it this because she has a bloody great war hammer in her arms. It's not sexy, but, hey, it's a friggin' war hammer.



What company in their right mind changes the look of arguably its main character so dramatically that when a games mag puts him on the cover, no bugger recognises him?

blood-covered mitts on them and the new multi-tiered battle arenas make even the most amateur of confrontations much more interesting. It definitely has to be said that *Deception* really improves on *Deadly Alliance* when it comes to how the damage is being dealt out – and it's probably safe to say that the fans that were previously complaining are going to be more than happy with this latest offering from Midway.

The main Arcade mode is as predictable as ever. Keeping the same three-style combat idea first seen in *Deadly Alliance*, this will see you travelling up through the ranks of the now legendary, netherworldly tournament in an effort to take down the evil Dragon King. We couldn't help but notice that the

differences between the combat this time round and that in *Deadly Alliance* are a little too slight. Apart from the addition of Breakers, which help to thwart combos, there's not much that shows improvement and all the additional modes in the world (like Puzzle Kombat, Chess Kombat and a new improved Konquest Mode) doesn't help disguise this.

Unfortunately there are other faults to be found. The Chess Kombat mode which sees chess pieces swapped for fighters is painfully dull and very time consuming unless you manage to spice it up with some additional rules of your own (Strip Chess Kombat anyone?), and many of the faults with the basic fighting that were found in *Deadly Alliance* – such as moves that are seemingly impossible to avoid

unless you're gifted with the reflexes of a tightly-wound clockwork cat, and characters that are so obviously better than others that it's simply easier and faster to flick the switch and restart if you're unlucky enough to encounter them in Arcade mode – are all still in here and are as irritating as ever.

This is good effort from Midway and it has added the things that were so stupidly missed out from *Deadly Alliance* – but that's all it's done. The extra games are all very nice and shiny but some more work should have gone into creating a level field of play, wherein each character can compete fairly and we aren't left damning Kobra's utter rubbishness as Noob-Smoke kicks seven varying shades of faeces out of him yet again. Sort it out Midway. ■



Rumours that the river of slime from *Ghostbusters II* appears have been greatly exaggerated.



Ashrah may have a terrible defensive stance but goddamn his whites are whiter than white.



If these two fighters aren't just the laziest designs ever to appear in a beat-em-up, then this caption doesn't exist.

**VERDICT****LOOKS**

Easily the best looking Mortal Kombat game yet, not that that says much.

SOUND

There's nothing too special here but it certainly does the job well enough.

GAMEPLAY

Fighting gets tiresome but the Puzzle Kombat mode rocks the Earth.

LONG TERM

There's lots to unlock, but will you be motivated enough to do it?

OR YOU COULD TRY

As deep as it is stunning, this is simply one of the best. The soul still burns.



It maybe 2D, but this is fast, tactical and spectacular – a joy to play.

95%

SUMMARY

If you're a fan of the series then you're welcome to the denial, but if you take away the blood and fatalities, it can't really compete with some of the better fighting games the genre has to offer. It would appear that *Psi-Ops* and *Ballers* were nothing more than a blip.

69
PERCENT

WORMS: FORTS UNDER SIEGE

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: Sega | DEVELOPER: Team 17 | PRICE: \$99.95 |
RATING: G8+ | WEB SITE: <http://worms.team17.com>



1-4 Player



Memory Card



Dual Shock 2



2-16 Online

IN THE KNOW

- Each type of fort section allows for different weaponry.
- Features indestructible landscapes.
- 30 different weapons with loads of multiple upgrades.

RELEASE DATE
OUT NOW

IF THIS GAME WAS

AN OLD CHOPPING TOOL IT WOULD HAVE TWO NEW HEADS, AND THREE NEW HANDLES

It's not the same axe, y'see. And this game just doesn't feel like the old Worms.

STAND OUT MOMENTS



Call an airstrike and you'll get an eagle-eyed view of an eagle-bomber.



Creep up to an enemy, and shoot him at point blank range.

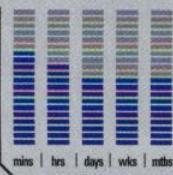


Lose a fort and your worms will commit suicide. Annoying.



The wacky weapons are back. Look - a fridge that explodes! Wahay!

PLAYTIME



The focus of the game is now on the protection of forts, not worms.

Jet-pack your way to a decent attack position, or rely on your fort's weaponry.

Worms in ancient outfits firing miniguns? Dumb as a big bag of hammers.

WORMS: FORTS UNDER SIEGE

REALLY IN NEED OF FRESH BAIT

Over twenty years ago there once existed a game called *Tanks* in which you, and another player, played two of the titular vehicles separated by a mountain. To fire shells you had to set a trajectory and a power level. It was fun. There was once a game called *Lemmings*. Viewed side on and featuring a group of lemmings of only a few picture elements in size that had to escape strange worlds using their ability to build, you had destroy the scenery and commit suicide. It was fun and funny. These two games were crossbred by a clever chap called Andy Davidson into a game called *Worms* back when people actually cared about the names behind the games. *Worms* has gone through several iterations, but none as great as its transition into 3D in the rather obviously named *Worms 3D*. Until now.

Part of the reason *Worms* was *Worms* was that your bombs and missiles could destroy the landscape

and you could burrow. Like a worm. This no longer happens. The game has shifted from being about free-roaming war where victory is gained by the annihilation of the enemy to a game where each side must build up their forts, and win by destroying the enemies in an indestructible environment. With each turn you can move a worm, build a part of your fort and fire. Defense of your fort is all important; its destruction is game over. This means that half an hour spent working on a strategy where you have sent out crack units

DEFENSE OF YOUR FORT IS ALL IMPORTANT; ITS DESTRUCTION IS GAME OVER

+ to take the enemy head-on can be totally scammed by a shot from an enemy fort that takes out your central tower. All. That. Work. For. Absolutely. Nothing.

It's this sort of addition that makes you want to look for the nearest horse to punch out and

makes the game more like *Tanks* than anything *Worms*-like. Ranging your weapons in 3D requires you to fire a few shots to see where they land. This makes for frustrating one-player frustration that is exasperated by an enemy that takes its sweet time to work out a move before it does the equivalent of kicking in your sand castle because it understands the game world better than you ever can. Any improvements to the fun factor given to a multiplayer

+ game is mostly down to all humans suffering from the same level of confusion given by a game that could do with being more like worms and less like a squeaking game of *Crossbows & Catapults*. More annoying than fun and not funny. ■



Isn't 3D marvellous? Well, no. Sure, it works okay in real life, but certain games should be kept well away from the extra dimension.



Zooming out to play helps. About as much as a deliberately misleading caption. Huh heh.



VERDICT

LOOKS

Solid lumps of pink with a camera that doesn't help your cause.

SOUND

High-pitched worm voices and basic sound effects do little to help.

GAMEPLAY

Worms in name only, this is something less fun and more time consuming.

LONG TERM

Saved by Multiplayer and the fact that you and a mate are recovering from the flu.

OR YOU COULD TRY



WORMS 3D

Worms, but in 3D and therefore not as accurate as when it was in 2D.



WORMS BLAST

Lacks many weapons and humour, two things a *Worms* game needs.

86%

SUMMARY

A great idea is let down by cumbersome cameras, the difficulty in ranging your weapons and the fact that you can't blow the landscape to pieces. Make the game 3D, but why not allow for a 2D cross-section view and scenery than can go boom?

60
PERCENT

SLY 2: BAND OF THIEVES

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: Sony | DEVELOPER: Sucker Punch Productions | PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: G8+ | WEB SITE: www.suckerpunch.com/



**RELEASE DATE
OUT NOW**

» IF THIS GAME WAS

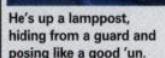
A CHILDREN'S
CARTOON SERIES IT
WOULDN'T BE
THE RACOONS

Because the game isn't quite as obvious as it might be and doesn't feature a ham-fisted environmental message.

STAND OUT MOMENTS



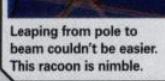
Would you just look at his little face. G'wan – look at him!



He's up a lamppost, hiding from a guard and posing like a good 'un.

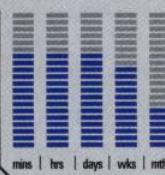


Creeping along a ledge with accompanying musical chords.



Leaping from pole to beam couldn't be easier. This racoon is nimble.

PLAYTIME



IN THE KNOW

Features a racoon, hippo and a tortoise.

Has more in common with *Metal Gear* than you might expect.

'Thieves' is spelt 'I' before 'e'.



You've got a superhero hippo who isn't, a racoon who's just too busy being cool and a tortoise who wears a hat. What's not to like?



First-person view will highlight locations you should be getting to, and enables you to check out this dude.

SLY 2: BAND OF THIEVES

WOULD YOU JUST LOOK AT HIS LITTLE FACE!

“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” Paul of Tarsus’ letter to the Corinth school.

Well ya boo sucks to Paul of Tarsus, he obviously hasn’t enjoyed the gentle pleasures of Sly 2. And anyway, it’s ‘spoke’ not ‘spake’. Now you are older you speak like an idiot. Relax. Sure, the sequel to *Thievius Racoonus* isn’t the most testing of games available to the modern chap or chapette – but it has real heart and that can go a long way. This is non-threatening gaming at its most non-threatening and endearing. You are both ace thief Sly Racoon and his Band Of Thieves and it is up to you to steal back the pieces of the last

game’s nefarious villain – Clockwerk. But oh no! Someone has already taken them for purposes that we’re going to say are, yes, nefarious.

This quest of burglary is split into a series of missions that enable you to get closer to your prize and if you’ve seen crime caper movies like *The Italian Job* or *Ocean’s 11* you will know the deal. You can’t just walk in and take the object of your desire. To steal to a valuable item (Clockwerk’s tail feathers, for example) you must first pull off a series of minor jobs like pick-pocketing keys from guards, replacing a painting with one that contains a bugging device and

+ **A GAME THAT PLAYS VERY MUCH LIKE HOW YOU'D IMAGINE 'SUNDAY AFTERNOON: THE GAME' WOULD**



Combat includes two melee attacks and a throw, which come complete with cartoonish ‘ARGHHS’!



When Sly needs both hands he bites down on his cane to the sound of chomping.



Just look at him and his cel-shaded self. What a cute little rabies-carrying fella he is.

SLY 2: BAND OF THIEVES



VERDICT

LOOKS

Some beautifully detailed cel-shading gives it a real ‘toon flavour.

SOUND

Nothing insanely amazing, but there’s a well judged use of effects all round.

GAMEPLAY

Rarely aggressive, mostly pleasant. You will get through this.

LONG TERM

Once finished, there’s little to return for, apart from his cute little face.

OR YOU COULD TRY



I-NINJA
Another most acceptable platformer, this time featuring a pissed-off ninja. **80%**



JAKII: RENEGADE
If you like your games with a darker palette then give this big-eared git a whir. **92%**

SUMMARY

More like receiving a massage than getting a slap, this is a gentle gaming tail of thievery that won’t cost you a single night’s sleep and will only cause difficulties for those recovering from major brain surgery. If we were to define this as a new genre, we’d call it ‘lounge core’.

76
PERCENT

DEF JAM FIGHT FOR NY

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts | DEVELOPER: Aki | PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: MA15+ | WEB SITE: www.eagames.com



1-4 Player

Memory Card

Dual Shock 2

IN THE KNOW

Fight against the likes of Ice T and D-Mob.

Features more spectacular Blazin moves than ever before.

Successfully taps in to the street image.

PRIOR FORM

Aki has already had much success with numerous wrestling titles, but finally struck gold with last year's *Def Jam Vendetta*. Aki's hardcore wrestling engine perfectly suited the streets and scored another hit for Electronic Arts.



RELEASE DATE
OUT NOW

» IF THIS GAME WAS

IF THIS GAME WAS A STAR WARS FIGURE IT WOULD BE FROM THE NEW TOY LINE

Much like the new figures of Luke Skywalker and co., we've never remembered seeing the likes of Ice T and Omar Epps looking quite so impressive.

FIRST LEVEL



You start off rescuing D-Mob from a quick spell in the slammer.



A neat identikit parade is used to piece together your fighter.

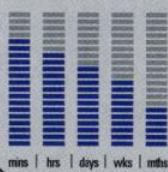


Now you need to choose a fighting style that's as street as your bling.



It's time to face off against D-Mob's homie and prove yourself.

PLAYTIME



If the action gets obscured, the crowd will phase out so you can see just how much damage you're causing.



One hidden feature will see fighters combine into an indescribable mess of various limbs.



Whenever you get the chance, kick or push your opponent into the crowd; you'll be glad you did...

DEF JAM FIGHT FOR NY

GUNS DON'T KILL PEOPLE, WAPPERS DO

Ah, to be a rapper. Fast cars, fast women, the ability to shoot your East/West coast rivals down in a hail of bullets and the chance to wear more diamonds than your local jewellery store has on in its display cabinet – it's definitely not something to be sniffed at.

Yup, if we weren't hardcore, embittered journalists with a penchant for meeting tight deadlines and playing more *Pro Evolution* than was good for us, we'd take to the rapper lifestyle like a duck to proverbial water.

Still, such aspirations are currently beyond our control, so we're more than content to play Aki's follow-up to its fun, but rather flawed *Def Jam Vendetta*. Fortunately Aki has paid attention to the complaints of its original title and has delivered a sequel that not only has more

depth, but also delivers greater aesthetics and gameplay to boot. Each and every fighter you go up against is beautifully realised and captures every move and nuance of the individual it's based on. Admittedly, a lot of the stars have been anatomically enhanced (and no, we don't mean in the genital area), so the likes of Ice T and Snoop Doggy Dog now look a lot more imposing than they ever did in their blinging videos. Indeed, Ice T in particular cuts quite an impressive figure when you first meet him, but also reveals one of the game's most annoying flaws.

"You're a punk, yah daddy's a punk and your mamma's a bitch," mocks the cool one as he grinds your punk arse into the ground for what feels like the umpteenth time. To call *Def Jam FIGHT For NY* unbalanced is being polite. Like the

ridiculous diamond encrusted medallions that adorn *Def Jam's* many fighters, the game's difficulty swings from one extreme to the other. There's nothing more frustrating than dusting several bad guys (often in under a minute) and then finding yourself stuck on a particularly difficult boss character. Crack (AKA Fat Joe) is one of the best examples and perfectly illustrates just how unbalanced the game can get. Let him perform a certain move on you and you're totally defenceless and immediately susceptible to another, even more dangerous attack.

Fortunately, these bouts are few and far between and frustration soon gives way to sheer joy as you gleefully revel in kicking the hell out of such brothers as Sean 'No one understands what I'm saying' Paul and Danny 'Look at my tats' Trejo.

If you thought the last iteration of *Def Jam* was a violent affair, you'll be pleasantly surprised (or not) to hear that Aki has turned the brutality up to 11 and delivered one vicious fighter. Bloodthirsty crowds surround you in most locations and are more than happy to join in the scrap and deal out additional punishment (or offer weapons) to whoever comes near them. Throw your opponent into the crowd, or one of the many inanimate objects that surround each arena and the fun really starts... Don't like the look of your opponent's pretty boy face? Then brutally stomp the crap out of it while it's pinned against that pool table. Want to cause a massive amount of damage? Then grab that wrench from the bald guy in the crowd and use it to send your

DEVELOPER AKI HAS TURNED THE BRUTALITY UP TO 11 AND DELIVERED ONE VICIOUS FIGHTER



O.E. charges up a headbutt. Either that or he's just been punched in the face.



Once you're all raged up, it's time to kick some serious ass, Blazin-style. Or something kewl like that.

GOOD POINTS

- Great looking fighters. That's not to say they're handsome, mind.
- Satisfyingly violent.
- A nice spin on the usual wrestling title.

»

**BAD POINTS**

- A bit too bling for us.
- Features some extremely unbalanced gameplay.
- Story mode is just far too easy to complete.

«



No matter what, Ice T will never be as terrifying now that we've seen him on *MTV Cribs*.



The Blazin attacks deliver every bone-splitting punch in great dramatic detail.



Grab a weapon from the crowd and let the real beatings begin in earnest...

BLAZIN SQUAD

BLAZE THE TRAIL TO DEF JAM VICTORY

As with *Def Jam Vendetta*, each and every fighter has a devastating Blazin move that can seriously up the ante in your favour. Once your Blazin bar is full, your character screams in victory and prepares for action. Grabbing hold of your opponent and moving the right analog stick in one of four directions will select the required special and see your fighter going into a devastating flurry of attacks that take place in satisfyingly violent slow motion. Lovely.



The Blazin mode: for when uber-violence just isn't violent enough.



Rumours that there's a Waltz mode in the game have been greatly exaggerated.

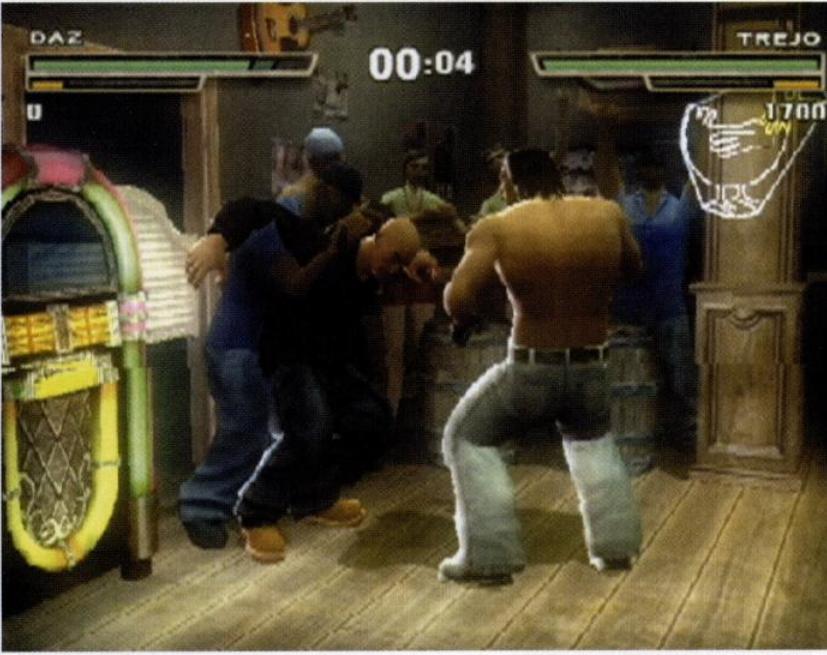
hapless foe straight to the floor. The savagery on display is quite intense, but also highly enjoyable. It's hard to say if we're simply untamed savages who adore destruction, or (more likely) that we just want to kick seven bells out of the likes of Omar Epps and Carmen Electra. Like *Def Jam Vendetta*, continual punishment against your opponent raises your Blazin bar until you're ready to unleash hell. You then go through a devastating attack that will either completely deplete, or seriously lower your opponent's energy.

Unsurprisingly, the game's testosterone-fuelled plot is enhanced (or ruined – your choice) by a typical hip-hop soundtrack and all the rappers are on hand to lend their dulcet tones to their onscreen counterparts. It gives the game that bit of EA flair and perfectly complements the onscreen action. *FIGHT For NY* uses an enhanced version of the original game engine and as a result the onscreen

fighters now look better than ever. The destructive environments are soon littered with all sorts of debris and blood runs freely from each fighter. It all looks incredibly slick and helps give the game a distinctive style that sets it apart from other 'it's just sweaty men touching each other' wrestling titles.

Sure, you can dress your fighter in all sorts of swish gear and blinging jewellery and Henry Rollins is on hand to teach you new Blazin moves and generally improve your tactics, but once you've taken away all the gimmicks, you're left with what is still a niche title.

While today's youth may no doubt find the story rather gripping, all these stars pretending (or is that wanting?) to be hardcore mofos seems just a little bit silly to us. Fans of the original will certainly enjoy this improved sequel, but those who like their bling well away from the ring may not be so sure. ■



The crowd will often give you a helping hand – the more popular you are, the more likely they are to hold up some mook while you pound the crap out of him.



VERDICT

LOOKS

Fighters are instantly recognisable and extremely well animated.

SOUND

A rich soundtrack perfectly complements the brutal onscreen action.

GAMEPLAY

Woefully unbalanced and short, but great fun while it lasts nonetheless.

LONG TERM

Once everything is unlocked, there's little incentive to continue playing.

OR YOU COULD TRY



If you want the complete Lycra-clad experience, you won't find a better game.

94%



Easily the most in-depth and absorbing fighter on the PS2.

94%

SUMMARY

Aki and EA turn up the bling to deliver a great update that totally expands on the original game. The storyline is still as trite as ever, but if you're looking for a title that fuses some exciting wrestling with hardcore rappers, *Def Jam FIGHT For NY* will be right down your alley.

78

PERCENT

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: Konami | DEVELOPER: In-house | PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: G | WEB SITE: uk.konami-europe.com



**RELEASE DATE
OUT NOW**

» IF THIS GAME WAS

A QUOTE FROM JOSE MOURINHO IT WOULD BE EITHER "I AM A SPECIAL ONE" OR "GOD, AND AFTER GOD, ME."

Because after arrogance comes a fall.

STAND OUT MOMENTS



The lofted through ball is much more powerful than before.



New Master League is utterly addictive.

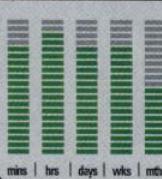


Brilliant, brilliant animation.



The world's worst pitch - the lines make it unplayable.

PLAYTIME



IN THE KNOW

Referees are actually on the pitch this time round.

No more handballs.

The half time music is the PES 3 theme.

PRIOR FORM

This long-running football series has been long-established as the best football game there is. The previous three games have scored (chronologically) 97%, 98% and 97%. The backlash starts here.



Occasionally the camera will cut away and make a set piece more dramatic, TV-style.



Corners are even less effective this time around. We scored, on average, one out of every twenty.



There are loads more things to buy in the PES Shop - different balls, a new stadium, hairstyles and, above, the ability to change players' celebrations.

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4

HYMN 4:42 – KONAMI FAITHFUL, JOYFUL AND TRIUMPHANT?

A nd so play™ makes some kind of dodgy PES-as-a-quasi-religious-experience analogy. Hmm. But wait – this isn't some poorly conceived A-level sociology paper, this is a decent point – videogames magazines, and especially this one, have been preaching the benefits of a life of PES over a life of gluttony (FIFA) for some time now. The question is: have we lost our faith?

The short answer to that one is 'no'. The medium-sized answer is 'no, not yet'. A

super-sized answer with a vanilla milkshake would be 'no, not yet, but if Konami keeps this up there could be trouble ahead'.

Here's one way we've been evangelical about Pro Evo: it convinces you that it's *real* football – something that's unique in videogame football. It's in the animation, in the player likenesses, in the way that matches too and fro and in the way that great, improvised football moments can and do happen. It's as close to controlling the action in a Champions League match as you

get. Here's the quandary: why is it then that PES 4 has last year's France team? Half of the squad has retired: Lizarazu, Thuram, Desailly and Zidane all hung up their national boots after Euro 2004. Why is it then that Paul Scholes still pulls on his number 11 shirt for England? How can it be that Cafu still marauds the right flank for Brazil? Consider that illusion shattered.

There is absolutely no excuse for not updating the national teams. FIFA can do it, so why can't PES? Pro Evo 4 even has all the latest club team transfers: Owen to Madrid, Rooney to Man Utd and so on, but last summer's international teams. Lazy – that's what it is, and an area where, in spite of PES 4's new licenses, FIFA steals a march.

So there's the licensed Dutch League – so what. What's the use of it if van Nistlerooy plays for Man Utd but van Mistlerooy plays



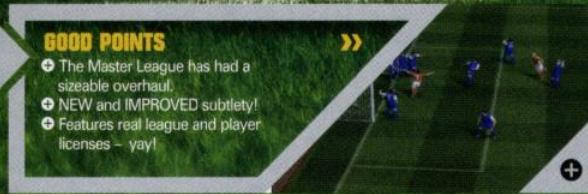
Check out your opponent's data including their formation, average player rating and who their star man is.



Learn how to play the Becks way – Training mode will put you through, er, training in every aspect of football.



Headers are more easily directed in open play, yet impossible to direct when you're in the opponent's box. Go figure.

**GOOD POINTS**

- The Master League has had a sizeable overhaul.
- NEW AND IMPROVED** subtlety!
- Features real league and player licenses – yay!

**BAD POINTS**

- That bloody scripting is obvious in Single-player mode.
- Last year's international player roster. Mostly.
- Licenses wasted!

FOOTBALL? BEAT-'EM-UP MORE LIKE...

ATTACK, BLOCK, COUNTER-ATTACK, COMBO!

This version of *PES*, more than ever, is about player skills. This version of *PES*, more than ever, is about combos. The new moves in *PES 4* make it a lot like a beat-'em-up – hence our 'or you could try' choice. For example, one new move is a triple shoot feint – hit ⌘ three times in quick succession, followed by ⌘ and your player will shape to shoot three times and each time just do a dummy instead, enabling you to go round a fooled 'keeper. Here are some of the new moves to give you an idea. You'll need to get some practise if you're going to use 'em, though.

EXTRA FAST SPRINT

Repeatedly tap ⌘

PUSH BALL OUT IN FRONT

(you can then hit a more accurate shot)

⌘ + ⌘ (while player is stopping)

THREE SHOT FEINT

⌘ x3, ⌘

STEP OVER

⌘ + Double tap UP or DOWN (while stationary)

SEARCH PASS

Hold ⌘ (while in possession)

UPPER BODY FEINT

Tap ⌘ or ⌘ whilst you're dribbling.

PLAYER NEAREST THE BALL TAKES EITHER A SHOT OR A PASS

⌘ + ⌘ / ⌘ (do so with two men standing over the ball for a free-kick)

PLAYER WHO'S NEAREST THE BALL PUSHES THE BALL OUT

R3 (do so with two men standing over the ball for a free-kick)

CYCLE THROUGH FREE KICK TYPES

SELECT



for Holland? Davids plays for Inter yet Darit plays for his country? Go figure. It's this 'we've got some of the licenses but not all so we're going to do the best we can do and the player will have to change it' attitude of the game that's a huge let down. Especially after we were promised that all this would be sorted out this year.

Okay, okay, okay, if you're that bothered about all this then you edit the game's data to your heart's content. The real thing to be evangelical about *PES* is the actual gameplay, right? Wrong.

Playing Two-player mode is fine – it all evens itself out in the end – but playing mano y CPU is like Toto pulling back the curtain revealing the 'wizard' of Oz for what he really was – an old man with a smoke and mirrors show. Yep, that scripting thing rears its ugly head again and for a while *PES 4* fooled us... it was only until we got playing it on our lonesome that we began to see the strings. Low scoring games with 20 shots on target, superstar wingers who can no longer cross the ball once you've gone a goal up,

defenders who suddenly stop man marking and give strikers acres of space in which to receive the ball... All these tricks and more are still present – we recommend that you only play *PES 4* in two-player if you want to keep your hair. And your controller intact.

There's always *PES*' Master League, though, and *PES 4* features the best version of it yet. You can choose three styles: original Master League, start with your chosen team's squad, or pick an all-star squad with

This isn't a review of the 'PES ideal' and neither should it be... but then neither is this a review of *PES 4* in isolation: *PES 3* exists as do 1 and 2. *Pro Evo 4* is the best version yet, of that there is no question, and quite a decent leap forward over the previous game. Yet we're getting tired of the scripted gameplay, the way that the computer compensates a team for having a man sent off, or that your world class striker can't tap the ball into an open goal from one

THE REAL THING TO BE EVANGELICAL ABOUT PES IS THE ACTUAL GAMEPLAY, RIGHT? WRONG

limited funds. The best thing is that your players gain experience (depending on their involvement in a game), experience that is allocated to their skill scores. You can also train them up in the off-season and target specific areas of their skills. Plus buying and selling players is harder than ever... It's the closest thing to *Pro Evo* meets *Champ Manager* yet.

yard out. We feel really let down by that name and license thing – still – and there's no Network Play even though the Xbox version has Live support.

So consider this score is a protest – a call for a re-formation if you like, of that original *PES* idea that promised the perfect football game experience, but has so far failed to deliver. Amen to that. ■



Some of the refereeing is questionable at best – playing at home can be a huge advantage.



Most British teams don't have the proper names. You'll have to spend a few hours in Edit mode to set things straight.

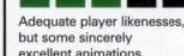


Master League is much-improved – sadly, though, there are still no national leagues.



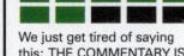
VERDICT

LOOKS



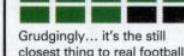
Adequate player likenesses, but some sincerely excellent animations.

SOUND



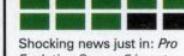
We just get tired of saying this: THE COMMENTARY IS ABSOLUTELY RUBBISH.

GAMEPLAY



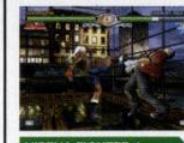
Grudgingly... it's the still closest thing to real football there is.

LONG TERM



Shocking news just in: *Pro Evolution Soccer 5* is out next year!

OR YOU COULD TRY



VIRTUA FIGHTER 4

Sega's grand fighter's depth of control earns it the *Pro Evo* comparison.

94%



VIRTUA TENNIS 2

Sega's grand tennis sim is endowed with a great Two-player mode.

90%

SUMMARY

The definitive version of *Pro Evolution Soccer* (until next year's game, of course) is messed up by having last year's team rosters. Lazy, lazy, lazy. Plus, that scripting problem is still the gaming equivalent of seeing the strings on a puppet. Note to Konami: MUST TRY HARDER.



PERCENT

FIFA FOOTBALL 2005

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: EA Sports | DEVELOPER: In-house | PRICE: \$99.95
AGE RATING: G | WEB SITE: fifa2005.ea.com



Memory Card



Dual Shock 2

1-8 player

RELEASE DATE
OUT NOW

» **IF THIS GAME WAS**

A BOXOUT IN A FIFA REVIEW IT WOULD BE AN 'IF THIS GAME WAS' BOXOUT

Because it's always the same, with only a slight difference from the one used a year ago.

STAND OUT MOMENTS



Set pieces. You battle away and win a corner. Here's your reward...



Each potential goalscorer is represented by a button. Choose one.

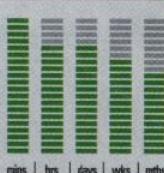


Barge your way through to the appropriate position, jump...



...and, almost always, nothing comes of it. These suck.

PLAYTIME



IN THE KNOW

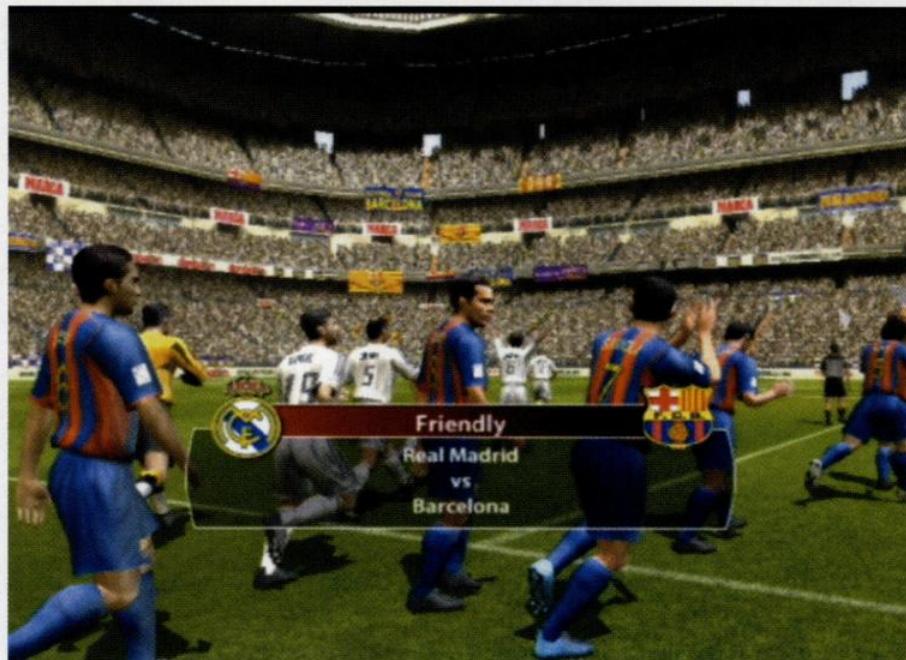
Long gone is the off-the-ball system.

Instead we have the First Touch system – an addition so good we hardly notice it.

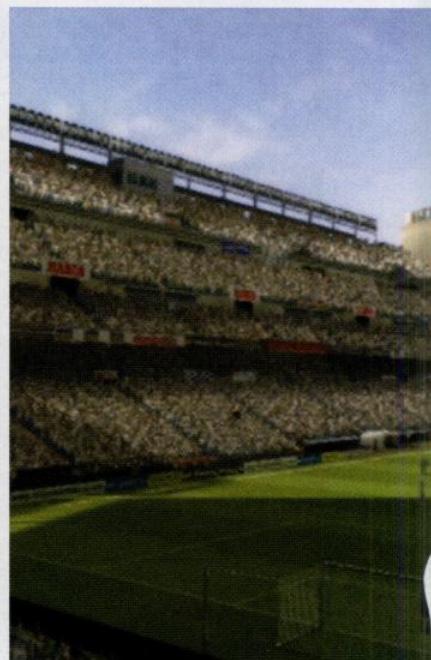
The Ronaldo still isn't as fast as we know he is.

PRIOR FORM

One myth insists that football was first played in China, with towns against towns attacking goals a mile wide. Since then it has been more refined and it's now hugely popular. The PS2 and EA are also popular, partly because they make a football game each year. It's called *FIFA*. It sells well enough to release one or two each year.



The presentation in *FIFA 2005* is wonderful and it does really add to the atmosphere, especially in matches such as Real Madrid v Barcelona where it has been known (in real life) to feature the odd pig's head being thrown about. True story. Don't believe us? Ask Figo.



It's competition time! Spot the play™ Editor in the crowd and win a tanner!

FIFA FOOTBALL 2005

HERE WE GO, HERE WE GO, HERE WE GO... AGAIN

An insight into the inner-workings of play™: when we receive code, it's stored in a cupboard. Like the journalistic clichés we are, this cupboard is about as organised as a tsunami. There are, however, certain consistencies within this wooden box – like how the games we always play are the ones generally at the top of the pile (so we can get to them quickly). We've had *FIFA 2005* code for a couple weeks now. We spent a half an hour looking for it. There were no such problems with the *Pro Evo* review.

Still, it's a new year as far as football's concerned, so as far as we're concerned, a new *IEAf* has been turned over. Who knows, maybe by the time we've finished with *FIFA 2005*, it'll be *Pro Evo*'s turn to collect dust underneath our copies of

Drakengard (no, we don't know how they got there either)...

To crush the suspense that no doubt plagued your eyes' transition to this paragraph, we're just going to come right out with it: *FIFA 2005* isn't going to be played any more by the play™ team this year than *FIFA 2004* was last year, which is to say, a lot less than *Pro Evo*. The list still goes like this – *Pro Evo*, *FIFA*, *Club Football* and *This Is Football*. If you don't like it, get a refund.

If we were more organised we could probably get away with saving all the negative sections from our *FIFA* reviews each year and copy-and-pasting them back together 13 issues later. Actually, we'll put it on a post-it note now so that we don't forget, because it certainly doesn't seem

that Electronic Arts is learning from its mistakes. The passing still feels uncomfortable, and it still doesn't always take the most obvious route (ie the one you tell it to take). The problem of no match ever really being that different also remains – this is especially the case in One-player mode where scoring past the computer soon becomes as routine as an annual release of what is essentially the same game. Most disconcertingly, though, is the issue we've had with *FIFA* since we first picked up a DualShock: it never feels like football, but instead an idealised version of the sport that's inherently more predictable. Still, we won't get too caught up on the *FIFA* problems of old, not since we've now got all new *FIFA* problems to write about...



Freekicks are still superior to those in *Pro Evo*, and Henry is still superior to the Chelsea back four.



Lesser mags would write about step overs and no end products here. We'll just settle for 'Look at those feet go!'



Replays are fine in *FIFA*, it's just that they often feel too polished and so never really convince.

GOOD POINTS

- If we had girlfriends half as good-looking as this, we'd probably believe in love.
- Full of different game modes.
- You just can't put a price on that official licence (but EA can).

BAD POINTS

- Has very similar problems to *FIFA 2002*.
- Has very similar problems to *FIFA 2003*.
- Has very similar problems to *FIFA 2004*.



VERDICT

VERDICT**LOOKS**

You just know that graphics designed with TV ads in mind are going to be great.

SOUND

Superb sound effects with a commentary that's as lame as it should be.

GAMEPLAY

The same as before but better and worse all at the same time.

LONG TERM

Easy transfers ensure that this will keep up to date until around November 2005.

OR YOU COULD TRY

PRO EVO 4
Shock! Horror! A *Pro Evo* game that doesn't get 90%. The backlash starts here.

78%



CLUB FOOTBALL 2005
Fifa production values plus *Pro Evo* controls equals... a waste of our *Pro Evo* time.

68%

SUMMARY

Whilst less convoluted in terms of gameplay than the previous one, *Fifa* still burdens itself with obvious flaws. As pretty and as solid as it might be, unless EA deals with these problems you can expect to read the exact same review next year.

72

PERCENT



"Hey, look! If I put my hand to my mouth like this, I look just like Ashley Cole!" As ever, the likenesses in *Fifa* are superb, although we would forgo the odd piece of visual panache in favour of improved gameplay.

The first goal we scored in *Fifa 2005* was an overhead kick with a certain horse-faced assassin. You can imagine how ace we thought we were. The second goal we scored on *Fifa 2005* was an overhead kick. You can imagine how quiet we went. It would seem that *Fifa* has now even further distanced itself from the sport it proclaims to convey – we've only ever seen three overhead kicks in our life, and one of those was in *Escape To Victory*. There's a thin line between over-stylised and just plain silly, and EA's flirting with it without a condom in its wallet.

The most frustrating thing about *Fifa 2005* though, is the control of the players. It never feels like you have complete control of your player, with dribbling feeling more like a tug-of-war between you and the game for the rights to the player. It's almost as if EA has some insane license deal with *Fifa* where it has promised to control all players at least 20 percent of the time. Pass the ball and watch as it goes five feet in front of the intended

recipient – not that this matters because the player will run on to it... only without your say-so. If we could think of another word for annoying we'd use it.

It's now time to rectify the implications of the previous paragraphs – *Fifa 2005* is good, and here's why: it's still pretty much the same as the last *Fifa* games.

FIFA 2005 IS GOOD, AND HERE'S WHY: IT'S STILL PRETTY MUCH THE SAME AS THE LAST FIFA GAMES

The emphasis on set-play gameplay rather than individual moments of pigskin wizardry is something that, to its benefit, it hasn't lost, while the defending aspect of the game remains the most effective of any football game around. Likewise, the presentation and aesthetic representation is, bar none, the best in the business. A shallow point perhaps, but when you've bought a game because you want to be Thierry Henry as he completes his hat-trick in what is an

exact replica of Stamford Bridge and takes Arsenal to the top in a fully-licensed Premiership table, there is no other choice. Hell, *Fifa 2005* is so beautiful it even manages to make Ronaldinho good-looking.

Last point, First Touch (aka this year's USP). Hoof the ball to a player and the

better he is, the better his control. That's it. And aside from the pretty flick-ons and turns that this enables, it's yet another change from last year that's so slight, it's irrelevant enough to relegate to a couple sentences at the back end of a review.

It's *Fifa*. The '2005' part is damn near superfluous. You know if you like it already, and you probably know if you're going to buy it already. As for us, we like it, just don't expect us to know where to find it in two weeks' time. ■

COMMENTARY

A SUBJECT SO BORING IT DOESN'T DESERVE A SNAZZY BOXOUT TITLE

Everybody knows more about football than everyone else, and everybody gets sick of commentators pronouncing it 'Cant-owner' or 'Heinz'. We could do a better job ourselves. It wouldn't be so boring either, because as near-perfect as *Fifa 2005*'s commentary is, it's still just

too tempting to enhance the crowd noises and drown out Motty and McCoist. We want options on our commentary, and by that we mean we want a Fanzone alternative, at least for the derby games. If it's good enough for Sky Sports it's good enough for PlayStation.



CLUB FOOTBALL 2005

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: Codemasters | DEVELOPER: In-house |
PRICE: \$99.95 | RATING: G | WEB SITE: www.codemasters.co.uk



1-8 Player



Memory Card



Dual Shock 2

IN THE KNOW

Eleven UK individual club packs available.

New 'Precision Trigger' button for tricks.

Create yourself as a Career mode player.



**RELEASE DATE
OUT NOW**

» IF THIS GAME WAS

A POLITICAL PARTY IT
WOULD BE THE
DEMOCRATS

Because believe it or
not, some people out
there do actually
remember that they
exist on voting day,
despite them
sometimes forgetting
it themselves.

STAND OUT MOMENTS



Likenesses: This could be
nobody but the horse-faced assassin himself.



After graduating
Hogwarts, Harry
wangled a job at Celtic.



The likenesses aren't just
good, but emotive too.
Just look at Drogba.



The Reds' archangel
looks as supremely
confident as ever.

PLAYTIME



▲ Stevie on a pitch: a sight we won't be seeing for a while (sniff). Good job the Reds are doing so well in his absence. Oh, hang on a minute...



▲ Obviously Milan wanted to push up here, but there was nobody in support and the cross just dribbled feebly out of play.

CLUB FOOTBALL 2005

ANY FLAVOUR, AS
LONG AS IT'S BLAND

If *FIFA* and *Pro Evo* are your two first choice strikers, where on the pitch does it leave *Club Football*? It's a tough one to call, especially since the corporate branding on the front of each of the different club-affiliated games already ensures it will become the centre-forward player Christmas stockings around the world (as well as barging down space for its 11-man range on the shelf at your local game emporium). Yup, Codemasters' title has returned, with a marketing gimmick as fiendish as any videogame before it, and a hunger to run up behind both Konami and EA's players and chop 'em down in the box. But does the Codies effort have enough originality, control and – goddamn it – backbone to become the third nag in a two-horse race?

Well, the fact of the matter is that beyond the branding – after the team-centric video intro has

finished and you've actually begun to play *Club Football* – it shows itself to be a rather strange mish-mash of elements cribbed wholesale from other football games, seemingly held together with an updated, sticky-footed *Sensible Soccer* engine. Like that much-loved retro chestnut, it's a loose, free-flowing experience. Unlike *Sensi*, it lacks the delicate ball control needed to change the flow of a game, with teammates holding position to such an extent that they try to receive passes from the other side of the touchline, while the enormous-seeming pitch discourages midfield play in favour of end-to-end desperation.

Part of the problem here is that *Club Football* is devoid of realistic

ball physics – observe with a slack jaw as the opposing goalie kicks an 80-yard punt upfield, only for the striker to trap the ball dead. Every time. It's frustrating to play against, particularly when closing down players in acres of space is so much less attainable than in other football titles. It wouldn't matter so much if it weren't so damn tough to score anything approaching a team-oriented goal, but attacks too often rely on either one-touch passes down the centre or hopeful (and wildly erratic) crosses into the box.

Like Manchester United, it's an enormous shame, because the presentation is first class all round, and (like Manchester United) though the players aren't really up to the challenge they certainly look the part, with player likenesses as similar to the players they are intended to resemble as they are in any other title available. So where on the field does *Club Football* sit? Unfortunately for Codemasters, it's on the subs bench, only to be played if you've got nobody else to field. ■

+ PART OF THE PROBLEM HERE IS
THAT CLUB FOOTBALL IS DEVOID
OF REALISTIC BALL PHYSICS **+**



▲ It's an open corner, but finding a striker will take a lot of practice.



▲ The replay option has a mixture of static and controllable cameras.



▲ Scoring a goal is near-impossible at first, with seemingly few options.



VERDICT

LOOKS

Contains fantastic player
likenesses and some
original animations.

SOUND

The usual roars, cheers and
boos echo from the stands
to average effect.

GAMEPLAY

Some great ideas, but ones
held together with second-hand
sticky tape.

LONG TERM

"Wanna play something?" says a friend. Chances are you don't choose this.

OR YOU COULD TRY



PRO EVO 4
Previously known as, 'The best football game ever.' Not anymore.



FIFA 2005
Takes a rather respectable number two position in a competitive league.

78%

SUMMARY

While this should please many a pre-teen who only watches football to follow one team, *Club Football* isn't tight enough to frighten either *Pro Evo* or *FIFA*. There are certainly worse football games out there, but Codies has a lot of training to do between now and next year.

68
PERCENT

THIS IS SOCCER 2005

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: Sony | DEVELOPER: London Studio | PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: G | WEB SITE: www.playstation.co.uk



1-8 Player Memory Card Dual Shock 2

IN THE KNOW

Features EyeToy Cameo for mapping your likeness to a player's face. 2-0!

Spectacularly fails to recreate the beautiful game at all. 1-5!

More tactically naive than playing John O'Shea – anywhere on the pitch! Own goal!



VERDICT

LOOKS



Some decent player likenesses but the animation is a little too exaggerated.

SOUND



Commentary is good, but when it's *your* name they're screaming it's even better.

GAMEPLAY



This Is Football? Would someone please give Trading Standards a call.

LONG TERM



We honestly can't see anyone playing this for more than twenty minutes.

OR YOU COULD TRY



PRO EVO 4
It might be called 'Soccer' but this is football through and through.
ISSUE 122 **78%**



FIFA 2005
Compared to *TIS* this actually deserves to top the charts.
72%

SUMMARY

A harsh score? Not in the slightest. *This Is Soccer* bares absolutely no relation to the real game of soccer, feeling overwhelmingly like a football game circa 1996. EyeToy Cameo is a wonderful addition, but it's not enough to be termed a 'saving grace'.

45

PERCENT

REVIEW



RELEASE DATE OUT NOW

» IF THIS GAME WAS

A BAD IMPRESSION IT'D BE DICK VAN DYKE'S ACCENT IN MARY POPPINS

It might pretend to be authentic, but the harder of Dick Van Dyke tries the more obvious his spectacular failure becomes.

STAND OUT MOMENTS



Pose like a moron for a few seconds and this could be you.



Map your likeness into the game and worm your way into Chelsea.

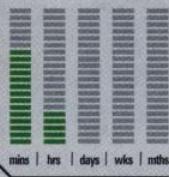


Bang in hat-tricks of goals and celebrate in a style fitting of a champ.



Bridgey and Powell together at last. It's like a good rom-com.

PLAYTIME



▲ Terry gives Ferreira a glance as if to say '£17 million? Jesus!'. The game's player likenesses are a little caricatured, if recognisable.



▲ For the most part, the stadiums remain faithful to their real-life templates. We could also have written this caption using the word 'stadia' but chose not to.

THIS IS SOCCER 2005

NO, IT'S NOT

It's entirely improbable that the developers of *This is Soccer* 2005 sat around at any point during the game's production and voiced an overwhelming desire for its footballers to control like hovercraft. Improbable, yes, but then something has to explain their 'unique' handling. Players don't so much sidestep or pivot as have turning circles, and while they move at a sprinter's pace, far quicker than *Pro Evo*'s or *FIFA*'s players, they don't so much run as levitate a few millimetres over the pitch. This makes man marking and tackling a joke, with games descending into end-to-end kickabouts totally bypassing the concept of a midfield. That only one kind of goal can be scored – the top corner screamer – further demonstrates its tactical naivety.

Seeking to uncover the depths of incompetence, *play™* took

Chelsea's defensive-record breaking squad and did a little Ranieri style tinkering – Kezman at leftback, Geremi at rightback, Cudicini up front, Petr Cech in central defence. Finishing the match with a clean sheet might seem an eye-opener, but that Scott Parker proved to be a

+ formidable goalkeeper is truly astonishing. Parker for England! The only handicap system seemingly employed in the game is the fact that the goalkeepers have a habit of falling over at anything resembling a challenge when played outfield. Still, it's hardly surprising our continental line-up was so effective as even when playing a vanilla 4-4-2 formation your defenders are as

likely to find themselves marauding into the penalty area as your strikers.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy is the fact that there is genuine innovation, hamstrung to an even greater degree than Kieron Dyer, Darren 'sicknote' Anderton or Steven Gerrard's propensity for season-shattering injury, by the travesty of the main game. That innovation is EyeToy Cameo, and its potential impact on the depth of immersion football games can offer is stunning. Pose in front of an EyeToy, let the PS2 work its mojo and voila! Powell plays for Chelsea. Watching your avatar skating over the turf like a streak of blue, banging in goals is surreal and

NOT EVEN JOSE MOURINHO COULD MAKE THIS SOUND GOOD

+ delightful in equal amounts. Even better, if your surname matches a name in the game's database the commentators shout your name with passion – it's almost euphoric until you realise you're actually playing *TIS* 2005. The score might look low, but remember 30 of those points account for EyeToy Cameo. Not even Jose Mourinho could make this sound good. ■



▲ Sorry to Celtic fans for showing Rangers scoring in this screenshot.



▲ Happy to score or just in love? Either way Bristol City players really like to celebrate.



▲ Sky Sports once had a compilation of Beattie's goals accompanied by *Beat It*. Think about it...

SINGSTAR PARTY

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: Sony | DEVELOPER: London Studio | PRICE: \$99.95 with mics, \$49.95 without | RATING: G | WEB SITE: www.singstargame.com



1-8 Player

Memory Card

Dual Shock 2

IN THE KNOW

Like the first one, but more shouty.
Features no Career mode.
Includes a mixed bag of 30 songs,
including *Girls Just Wanna Have Fun* and *I Should Be So Lucky*.



VERDICT

LOOKS

All the proper videos, like.
Ooh, that Tony Halley were
gorgeous weren't he?

SOUND

Though this can vary greatly
according to the player's
ability to croon.

GAMEPLAY

More playback options
would be welcome with the
next pack.

LONG TERM

To some lucky bugger out
there, this is a dream
compilation to cherish.

OR YOU COULD TRY



SINGSTAR

Where you can dream of
being successful at
something before you die.

80%



EYETOY: PLAY

Just as diverting, and less
migraine inducing for the
single mothers amongst us.

83%

SUMMARY

It's good to see Sony adding to the SingStar catalogue so soon, and this bumper party pack is exactly what fans are crying out for. It's basically the same game as before, so the same faults are all still there, but this time with no pretensions to anything except pointless fun. Gold!

82

PERCENT

REVIEW



RELEASE DATE OUT NOW

IF THIS GAME WAS

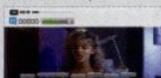
A TYPE OF SUICIDE IT
WOULD BE AS PART
OF A RELIGIOUS
DEATH CULT

Because even though
you know it's a really
strange thing to do, you
all walk out into the
lake in your pyjamas
and drink bleach.
Classy exit, losers.

STAND OUT MOMENT



And your great, great,
great granddaughter. Oh,
the humanity!



We challenge you to sing
this one flawlessly
without bleeding.

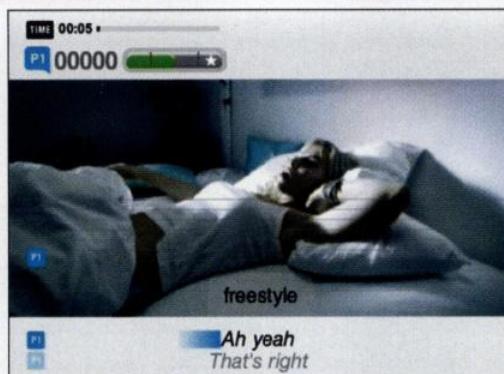


"Oooh, look at my cars."
 Nope, we'll just revoke
your license.



Inexplicable Mercury
Prize winners Franz
Ferdinand also appear.

PLAYTIME



Beautiful Natasha, if only you'd pronounce it 'hyperbole' instead of 'hyperbowl' we'd quite fancy you.



Ahhh, this brings back memories, and, thanks largely to its pitch, it also brings back stray dogs.

SINGSTAR PARTY

A SECOND WIND FOR
THE KARAOKE
CONNOISSEUR

It's 7:26 Sunday morning, and we're belting out a heartfelt rendition of Spandau Ballet's seminal *Gold* to a crowd of comatose friends who would like nothing more than to remain dead until noon. Always believe in your souuu-oooul. One of them mumbles something about needing professional help – and we don't think he means the Simon Cowell touch-the-knees-under-the-desk kind – but even he can't help be moved by the side-parting-sincerity of our performance. You're indestructible-huhh-huuuhhhh! Oh yeah – feel it, baby. If there's more truth to be found anywhere, we're yet to discover it.

Yup, it's a definite problem, but as many SingStar owners know, it's sometimes impossible to walk, stumble or even crawl past those red and blue mics without being overcome by an unquenchable urge to perform. Our friend obviously doesn't own SingStar; he doesn't recall how the night before, fuelled

by a tank of tequila kebabs, he channelled the spirit of Pink for five minutes and dazzled the room with his ability to be mad at pretty much anything for no reason. But that's the beauty of it, plain and simple. Sometimes, we all need to get something out of our system, and to do it with an audience makes the experience seem much less painful.

To this end, SingStar Party ditches the somewhat forced one-player Career mode from its first outing to indulge in team-based vocal tomfoolery, and includes 30 very loud favourites to add to your home karaoke repertoire. The closest thing to a ballad here is Beautiful South's painful party-stopper *A Little Time*, but even that duet's a world away from Elton and Kiki or The Buggles' *Video Killed The Radio Star*, the latter of which has

to be tried by everyone with a throat at least once.

While those of us with no discernible social life are left holding both candles at once, flicking pitch like a Shakespearean castrato, the rest of you can even make an evening of it with the 'Pass The Mic' competition, which now enables entry from eight players over seven varied competitive rounds. The random selection is still annoying (no, we still won't sing Dido's *White Flag* unless we're actually wearing her skin), but each team has five shuffle tokens it can play throughout the game to try and find a better choice. So it's tactical, drunken karaoke, then. Otherwise, there's not much to fault here, though we take no responsibility for how much of an embarrassment you make of yourself. ■

+ IF THERE'S MORE TRUTH TO BE FOUND ANYWHERE, WE'RE YET TO DISCOVER IT +



Wow – who would have thought this guy was gay during the Eighties? Huh? Huh?

top 5 charts

Buggles Video Killed The Radio Star

1	Spam & Eggs	8290	normal
2	Mark & Trevor Horn	7290	short
3	kieran & nicky	6240	normal
4	miss p & Trevor Horn	5190	normal
5	Nick r & Linda Jardim	4140	normal

Singstar Party saves the top five for each song, so you can beat yourself later on.



Team games randomise the selection, but each team gets five shuffles.

WRC 4

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: Sony | DEVELOPER: Evolution Studios | PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: G | WEB SITE: www.evos.net



IN THE KNOW

The 'Official Game Of The FIA World Rally Championship'...

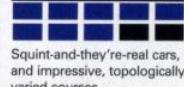
...as the stupidly long title informs us.
Features 'evolved' versions of today's top rally cars.

WRC 4



VERDICT

LOOKS



Squint-and-they're-real cars, and impressive, topographically varied courses.

SOUND



There's really just the sound of the road and your co-driver. As it should be.

GAMEPLAY



Responsive cars, a great impression of speed and a flamboyant camera. Nice.

LONG TERM



Championship and Events modes provide longevity for solo players.

OR YOU COULD TRY



COLIN MCRAE 2005
Solid stuff and offers a few extra car-tweaking options over WRC 4.



BURNOUT 3
The driving equivalent of Bruce Lee taking on all racing games ever created.

SUMMARY

In terms of instant reward and sheer speed, WRC 4 succeeds in trumping McRae 2005, but a lack of car set-up options, a convincing damage system and co-driver pace notes means it lacks the authenticity rally fans may crave. Racing game fans should definitely compare and contrast.

83

PERCENT



RELEASE DATE OUT NOW

» IF THIS GAME WAS

A RALLY DRIVER IT'D BE SEBASTIEN LOEB

A thoroughly accomplished driver, who sadly finished the 2003 World Rally Championship a solitary point behind the victor Petter Solberg.

FIRST LEVEL



When it comes to car porn, WRC 4 is of the hardcore variety.



Not only are the car models in WRC 4 exquisitely detailed...

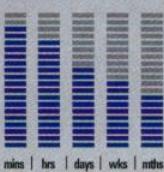


But, with a press of a button they 'explode' to show you everything.



Look! You can see inside, behind the tyres and everything! Awesome.

PLAYTIME



▲ A two player split screen mode caters for players with a rally-loving friend.



▲ Hot damn! Just look at that spoiler. This car has totally been pimped.



▲ The in-car mode is incredibly atmospheric, with the wiper blades struggling to shift the falling rain.

WRC 4

THE OFFICIAL GAME OF THE FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

When two sets of videogame developers get that thing we like to call reality down pat, at least as far as current videogame technology will enable, apply that knowledge to recreating the mud-chucking sport of rallying and furnish the resulting product, that would be the game, with a very austere, very white front end you end up with two superficially similar rally games.

For reasons of clarity we'll specify, those games are WRC 4 and Colin McRae 2005 and though superficially similar, they are far from clones of each other. As we pointed out in our recent review, Colin McRae 2005 is pretty arcade; WRC 4 is even *arcadier*, which is prevalent in three key areas – sensation of speed, the long distance chase camera and in the game's general air of forgiveness.

First to the speed issue – WRC 4 is quick, and on certain courses, especially in some of

the higher-powered cars, the sensation is intimidating, with a dab of the brakes required just to ensure you're totally in control. Naturally this provides plenty of scope for generating lots of air between the ground and your chassis – definitely a tick on the arcade credential checklist.

Next is the chase cam. While the bonnet cam is undeniably play™'s favourite for attacking each rally course, the distant chase cam provides an alternative high on thrills and spills. Not only does its high elevation remind us

WRC 4 IS QUICK, AND, ESPECIALLY IN SOME OF THE HIGH-POWERED CARS, THE SENSATION IS INTIMIDATING

of the manic *Mashed*, but a dramatic panning of the camera occurs whenever you take a particularly severe turn adding a splash of verve.

Combine the high speeds and high drama camera direction with

a forgiving damage model, where no matter how determinedly you crash your car it'll still manage to saunter its way across the line and suddenly potential-death-trap turns are negotiated at reckless speeds. As a general rule of thumb, exhilaration requires a certain sensation of danger, and WRC 4 only just balances the cotton wool-wrapped feeling its damage model provides with its extra lick of speed.

Of course, every rally driver needs a co-pilot, and Colin McRae 2005 was enhanced almost immeasurably by authentic pace-notes from Nicky Grist, delivered perfectly in advance of impending obstacles. Sadly, WRC 4's trail somewhat behind, the warning for hairpin turns, in particular,

is slightly too tardy to enable a satisfactory reduction in speed. It's this admittedly minor point that accounts for the admittedly minor points difference between WRC 4 and Colin McRae 2005. ■



▲ Access to SS stages is granted in the 'Events' mode. Pitting your skills directly against another driver makes a welcome change from time trials.



▲ A shot of the Mexico Rally, a new event in the FIA World Rally Championship. No taco when you finish it though.

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE THIRD AGE

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: EA | DEVELOPER: In-house | PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: MA15+ | WEB SITE: www.electronic-arts.com.au



1 Player



Memory Card



Dual Shock 2

IN THE KNOW

Executive producer Steve Gray worked at Square Enix...

...but failed to learn how to spin a yarn.

Tells an alternative, and boring, tale of Middle Earth.

PRIOR FORM

Executive producer Steve Gray worked on *Parasite Eve* and *Final Fantasy VII* at Square Enix, yet failed to capture any of the magic of those titles in *Third Age*. You probably know all about EA by now.



RELEASE DATE
OUT NOW

» IF THIS GAME WAS

A DVD extra it'd be an extraneous outtake on one of the LOTR DVDs

A side story removed for timing reasons, because to be blunt, it's inconsequential to the overall tale.

STAND OUT MOMENTS



"play" is all about the power of a woman – you go girl!



Here Idrial teaches the pansy men how to fight like women.



She eviscerates all-comers with her Loudwater spell.



She's tough alright, but probably not as hard as an Ent.

PLAYTIME



This beast was supposed to be double-hard in the first film, but didn't he just fall over some steps and die? Rubbish.



Hadhod had better be careful – this guy's Orcing a new attack. Ba-doom tish!



Way down deep in the middle of the Congo, a hippo took an apricot, a guava and a mango. He stuck it with the others, and he danced a dainty tango. The rhino said, "I know, we'll call it Um Bongo". Somehow this is the perfect caption.

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE THIRD AGE

MY FIRST LORD OF THE RINGS ROLE-PLAYING GAME

The *Lord of the Rings: The Third Age* is like a kindly mother holding a child's hand as he nervously crosses the road, or a set of stabilisers to ease a small boy or girl through the ancient art of learning to ride a bike; it's a *Lord Of The Rings*-themed 'My First Role-Playing Game' and as cosy, friendly and accessible as that sounds, aiding players with their tentative first steps into the scary RPG genre.

When EA is quick to announce the fact that *The Third Age*'s executive producer is Steve Gray – who cut his teeth working on *Parasite Eve* and *Final Fantasy VII* for Square – it's only natural to dream a little dream of soaking up the atmosphere of Middle Earth, buying mythril from grouchy hobbits, perhaps

smoking a little Old Toby with wispy-bearded wizards, or maybe experiment with a bit of light dwarf tossing. Sadly there's none of that quaint sort of fun in *The Third Age* – it's as linear as watching the *LOTR* movies, though that's not to say it's not entertaining.

Perhaps the game's masterstroke is featuring Sir Ian McKellen as Gandalf narrating the story to the player – who better to chronicle your quest than Gandalf himself? However, if the word 'narrating' rings warning bells you'd be right to be concerned – the story doesn't so much unravel before you as barge you along. The Gondorian Berethor is attacked by Nazgul when doing something totally inconsequential and before being filleted by

dark forces, he is saved by Idrial, who true to her Elfish lineage, proves to be insanely powerful later on. Soon this wannabe Fellowship is completed by the dwarf Hadhod and Dunedain Ranger Elegost. Before we go any further we have to ask EA a question: If you're going to create bland clones of the *LOTR*'s main character's why not just feature them in the first place? Berethor is Boromir, Idrial is Arwen with a wig, Hadhod is Gimli without the sense of humour and Elegost is Aragorn if he wasn't played by housewife's favourite Viggo Mortensen. That's a reason to mark the graphics down right there.

Refreshingly, from the instant the Ring Wraiths first skewer Sean Bean's long lost



Pyrotechnic displays are not just confined to your party. We bet you're Goblin up these captions aren't you?



Berethor's skills provide party-wide enhancements – this one provides a free attack for two allies.



Morwen joins your party when you get to Rohan. She's in desperate need of powering up when she arrives.

GOOD POINTS

- Sir Ian McKellen's narration adds an air of authenticity.
- Characters acquire intriguing skills as they power up.
- THX certification!

**BAD POINTS**

- Sir Ian McKellen's narration only serves to expose your characters as nobodies.
- Has no narrative ambition.
- Linear quest.

**MWU HA HA HA HA HA HA****BECAUSE THE BAD GUYS ARE ALWAYS LESS DULL**

Completing chapters in the main quest, if indeed a tale of such insignificance can be deemed a 'quest', unlocks encounters in Evil mode (Lightning Strikes!) where players get the opportunity to experience battles from the viewpoint of those nefarious Orcs, Cave Trolls and better still, Nazgul, facing off against our band of plucky non-heroes. Sadly it proves to be little more than a curio – Berethor and co exhibit little fighting nous for the most part, easily defeated by a few motley Orcs. If you happen to be given control of a Nazgul you can navigate the attack menus blindfolded, deliver a vicious beating and immerse totally unscathed. Illogically, successfully implementing evil domination rewards your band of heroes with treasure back in the main game. No, it doesn't make much sense does it?



A The Nazgul or Ring Wraiths – Kings of Men corrupted by the power of the Rings.



A Here's another pic of one because we dig their cloaked evil vibe.

twin, the action comes thick and fast. In fact the player is granted control of Berethor at the beginning of this conflict, which although a little cruel (as Berethor has precisely this much chance of beating them: NONE WHATSOEVER!), it serves to introduce the player to the combat system in as friendly a way as possible (just excuse the fact that Berethor has to be brought back to life with Elf mojo afterwards).

The battle system is reminiscent of many turn-based battlers before it – there's a pecking order of attackers dictated by a character's Speed rating. The higher, the more quickly their turn comes around. When it's smiting time a choice of options arises – a standard attack, a specially imbued alternative that comes at the expense of Action Points and character or item specific commands – Berethor's leadership skills inspire battle hardness, Elegost's mental instability provides access to a frenzy enabling him to make two moves, while Idril utilises magic including healing, and later when equipped with the right artifact – Shadowcraft – she's capable of a

frighteningly quick flesh-rending of foes. Naturally as characters power up by winning fights they accrue experience points with which to enhance their base statistics, which can be applied as you see fit. High dexterity enables Elegost to pepper the enemy with arrows that inflict critical damage, while high spirit power turns Idril into a fearsome sorceress. The system is robust and intriguing new skills appear often – just as well considering that battling is all there is to *The Third Age*.

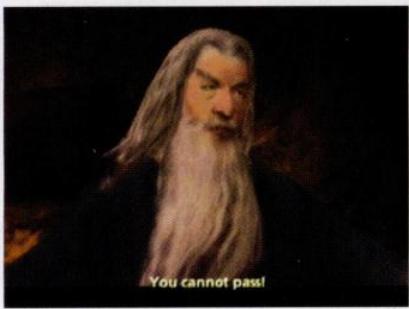
WHILE FRODO ET AL ARE OFF SAVING THE WORLD, YOUR PARTY FEEL LIKE IMPOSTORS

In true RPG convention it's lead character Berethor that roams the game's landscapes taking in famous locations such as Moria and Rohan, with the rest of the party appearing when battles take place after the traditional shuffle, shuffle, shuffle, bow-wow-wow, wumph. When strolling around there are precisely two things Berethor can do – search for chests containing items or walk



towards battle hotspots that usually reveal a little scenario and, of course, a battle straight after – there are no people to talk to, no puzzles to solve or levers to pull, just merry strolling interspersed with random hard battling. After an event has taken place, a short snippet of one of the *LOTR* movies plays with Gandalf waffling away over the top, usually telling you how his all-important Fellowship is off saving the day while your band of nobodies slog their guts out in an ancillary capacity. There's no

denying the snippets shine with sheen, but while Frodo et al are off saving the world, your party feel like impostors – the real adventure is elsewhere. And it is – in a legion of other superior RPGs. If you've never played an RPG before *The Third Age* will show you the ropes and perhaps sow the seeds of addiction, but you'll have to get your fix of epic adventure elsewhere. ■



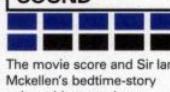
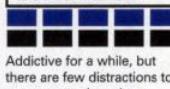
A So does *The Third Age* pass play™'s test of quality? Gandalf knows the score.



A This is apparently Berethor, not Boromir okay? So why the hell is he the spitting image of Sean Bean?



A We'd call these on-foot parts the 'Action' scenes, but with the Trade Descriptions and all...

**VERDICT****LOOKS****SOUND****GAMEPLAY****LONG TERM****OR YOU COULD TRY****KINGDOM HEARTS**

Real-time battles, engaging quests, RPG trappings and dark themes. Glorious. **90%**

**FINAL FANTASY X**

Turn-based battles, a sense of exploration and sumptuous visuals. **94%**

SUMMARY

Another case of 'what could have been' we're afraid. *The Third Age* could have been *Final Fantasy* in Middle Earth, instead it's the *LOTR* movies with turn-based battle cut-scenes. Slick and enjoyable up to a point, but ultimately repetitive due to its criminal lack of vision.



PERCENT

EYETOY: PLAY 2

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: Sony | DEVELOPER: London Studio |
PRICE: \$59.95 | RATING: G | WEB SITE: au.playstation.com



1-4 Player

Memory Card

Dual Shock 2

IN THE KNOW

Features vastly improved video capture technology.

Scan your own head in. That's your OWN HEAD.

Genuinely good fun for everyone.



**RELEASE DATE
OUT NOW**

» IF THIS GAME WAS

AN AWKWARD PLEASURE IT WOULD BE DIPPING DRY TRUNKS INTO A POOL

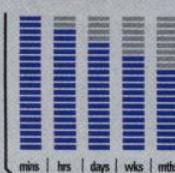
You haven't been swimming for ages and your wet trunks feel just a bit too familiar, yet worryingly comfortable.

FIRST LEVEL



Jones goes into space in a pathetic bid to escape Will's head.

PLAYTIME



A random freelancer decides to question Jones' extortionate rates.

The gag here, of course, is that Will Johnston is a vegetarian, albeit a fish-eating one.

The gag here, of course, is that Will Johnston is a vegetarian and eats mostly cheese.

EYETOY: PLAY 2

LIKE ADMIRING YOURSELF IN A MIRROR WHILE MAKING BABY NOISES, IN HEAVEN

When you play games you're not working your muscles, and especially not your heart. It's not healthy. Working in an office isn't physical enough either. Working in an office where you play games (and are currently reviewing *Play 2*) makes you as dog-tired as this unfit wreck of a man. But feel this mortal – it's excellent, although it could be fatal.

We're not going to mention the first *EyeToy: Play*. This is better in every way. We are just going to go straight into the praises of its wonderful sub-games. Knockout: what a bloody brilliant idea. You fight an on-screen boxer using the exact boxing style you learned from the movies. You can duck and weave and land combos. Get knocked out and you must shake stars off the screen within a time

limit. Land a knockout punch and you can watch a slow motion replay to something close enough to the music from a *Rocky* film. You will intentionally pose for this magnificent moment and the detection of your Balboa movements is just good enough to make this repeatedly hilarious and painfully rewarding. Perfect for building up confidence within a group. Next.

There are eleven sub-games on offer, all either pretty playable or just too perfect for nights when you lure some friends round so you can throw some shapes in their face. Some are light and just involve you having to bash

through a wall, others will have you saving goals or playing baseball with a rolled up copy of this mag for a bat. Having to run between bases by running on the spot is awesome. And tiring.

Not all of *Play 2*'s tests simply rely on your physical fitness. Some beg you to work out how to descend a building by existing in a box that you can make swing from each corner onto a matrix of pegs, bonuses and away from obstacles. Yes, it does initially feel that complicated and awkward to describe when you play it. Still, you could just work in a burger bar where orders are received from a catty waitress so you can build the correct heart-attack patty by selecting the right ingredients. Work fast because you're in a horrible job/joyable game. Man, this game is deep.

If you're a social creature you need this, and even if you're a semi-hermit who refuses to let your hair down, it will make casual visitors think that you jump around when you're alone and that gives you a sexy mystique. No doubt. ■

WE'RE NOT GOING TO MENTION THE FIRST EYETOY: PLAY. THIS IS BETTER IN EVERY WAY



"Let me see your war face!" Jones puts the play team through its paces every Monday morning.

He could play the guitar just like he was ringing a bell! Go, go! Go, Willy, go, go – Willy be good!



VERDICT

VERDICT

LOOKS

Loads of character and style, and it's also, in a way, prettily endearing.

SOUND

Well-judged music backs up some honestly satisfying slap effects.

GAMEPLAY

Not quite perfect, but it's undeniably fun and wildly entertaining all round.

LONG TERM

You'll always want to secretly try and get rid of a few pounds.

OR YOU COULD TRY



EYETOY: PLAY
The future began here, with this game, about 18 months ago.



SEGA SUPERSTARS
Like this, but with your favourite Sega characters and games.

SUMMARY

The best sub games are good enough to forgive those with more novelty than style, while the replay features, variety of gameplay and ingenious motion detection make ownership recommended to all those with the lungs for it. Bravo. Now go lie down.

85

PERCENT

THE GETAWAY: BLACK MONDAY

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: Sony | DEVELOPER: Team Soho | PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: MA15+ | WEB SITE: www.blackmonday.co.uk



1 Player

Memory Card

Dual Shock 2

IN THE KNOW

- Manages to stop swear words sounding cool.
- Features a more detailed map of London than the original.
- Contains humour of the unintentional variety.

RELEASE DATE
OUT NOW

» IF THIS GAME WAS

A DATE IN 1987 IT WOULD BE BETWEEN 19 AND 23 OCTOBER

A time also known as 'Black Monday', when the Stock Exchange lost 15 percent of its value. By the way the papers reported it you'd think it was the apocalypse. But no, it was just a massive waste of money.

FIRST LEVEL



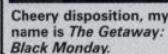
Look at his face. Just look at it. Now look some more. Hilarious.



No, seriously, would you just look at it. Isn't it good?

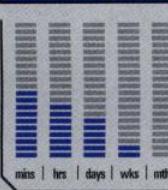


Hey! Come on - why not turn that frown upside down!



Cheery disposition, my name is *The Getaway: Black Monday*.

PLAYTIME



You really would have more fun copying out a London phone book onto wet sand.

It's Guy Ritchie's fault that we have to suffer those silly Vinnie Jones adverts.

Guy Ritchie is the Tim Westwood of British crime flicks - FACT.

THE GETAWAY: BLACK MONDAY

HOW ABOUT BASING A GAME AROUND AN ACCURATE MAP... OF A GAME?

Welcome to London, home of the uninspired use of sexual swearwords and drunken joypad controls. It's a place where you can't drive a marked police car for fear of being attacked by random gun-blaming gangsters, watch a cut-scene without failing to suppress laughter under a membrane of deep personal embarrassment or control one of three available potty-mouthed cockney characters without wishing more developers would just stop trying to create new ways to make a game borderline uncontrollable.

Running and shooting in a 3D world is possible without making the player feeling they've got a nervous twitch, we've experienced it. We've run about and shot people in a 3D world before. We know it can be done in a fluid, natural manner. But not in London. Not anymore anyway, not according to this A-Z of farcical videogame nonentertainment.

It's a heist movie of a GTA homage as viewed from three different perspectives, a police bloke, a boxer geezer and a thief...

chick. You'll probably have guessed that the lone female gets to play the stealthy sections, what you can't imagine is how ridiculous the police bloke's face is. Imagine Ben Affleck as described on Bo Selecta then add the sort of gurning expression previously only seen on manically-depressed deep-sea fish. Tragic hilarity is the name of this game. It's totally unintentional, of course, but

YOU GET TO GET OUT AND ENJOY THE WORST THIRD-PERSON CONTROLS EVER DEVISED

witnessing this sour melon of a man deal with the remorse of shooting a kid in the back is a comedy classic. Shame the humour is the game's only plus point, everything else is, well, equally laughable. Driving around London shows that the game's map has more back streets and cars on the road, while avoiding collisions and adhering to the game's time requirements is nigh on impossible. There's no sense of urgency and clattering your 'motor' around town proves less fun than

driving a bumper car with a stomach full of warm salt water. Still, at least you get to get out and enjoy what are easily the worst third-person controls ever devised.

There's simply no logic here. You can't look around smartly enough to see any enemy that isn't standing in front of you swearing and shooting, so reliance on the auto-aim button

is essential and is as much fun as that sounds. There's nothing bloody wrong with the move/look analog control of *Splinter Cell*, yet here somehow Team Soho seemed to have circumnavigated that fact and decided on a control system than feels and looks like a neck brace simulation. On springs. The game is significantly easier than its predecessor which stops it from being a complete circus of frustration, but only just. In a word, disappointing. ■



We hope that this looks like a pain in the ass to play, because, well, it was.



Prefer this to *San Andreas*? Then throw this mag in the bin. You have no use for it.



Proof that photo-realism really has little to do with *Black Monday*.



VERDICT

LOOKS

Ever so slightly grotesque faces stalk low resolution city streets.

SOUND

Music that loops after a few seconds, decent spot effects and a bloody awful script.

GAMEPLAY

Easier than the original yet far more ludicrous to play than fun.

LONG TERM

If you want to Free Ride round London then be Team Soho's guest.

OR YOU COULD TRY



THE GETAWAY
Impressive for being set in a realisticish London but that's it.

83%



GTA: SAN ANDREAS
Let's face it, every game compared to this is going to look like crap.

99%

SUMMARY

Worth renting for the fun of seeing a man with a permanent scowl get sworn at, or if you want to find out what happens when you take a script and decimate it with words your mother would rather pretend didn't exist. Shameful for all concerned.

41

PERCENT

PLAYLIST

GAME TITLE

SCORE

» WE SAY...

GAME TITLE

SCORE

» WE SAY...

TOP FIVE

GENRE

SHOOT-'EM-UPS



- 01 Time Crisis 3
02 SOCOM II: US Navy Seals
03 Rez
04 R-Type Final
05 Battle Engine Aquila

GENRE

SPORTS



- 01 Pro Evolution Soccer 3
02 Virtua Tennis 2
03 Tiger Woods 2003
04 Tony Hawk's 4
05 World Champ Snooker

GENRE

ACTION ADVENTURE



- 01 Grand Theft Auto III
02 GTA Vice City
03 Devil May Cry
04 Hitman Contracts
05 Beyond Good & Evil

GENRE

RHYTHM ACTION



- 01 Parappa The Rapper 2
02 Gitaroo Man
03 FreQuency
04 Mojibribbon
05 Britney's Dance Beat

■ .hack//INFECTION	80%	Solid first part to the offline MMORPG series
■ .hack//mutation	78%	Equally solid second part to the offline MMORPG series
■ 007: Everything Or Nothing	63%	Bond goes third person in another mediocre spy title
■ 4x4 Evo 2	50%	Rather uninspiringly follows the tracks left by the original
■ Ace Combat 4	87%	Superlative sky-searing stuff – Namco comes good
■ Aggressive Inline	88%	A great way to spend a few hours
■ Airblade	78%	Hoverboard anarchy that needs to be set free
■ Alias	50%	00-Barbie is, unsurprisingly, mediocre
■ Aliens Vs Predator Extinction	41%	A deeply disappointing strategy. Waste of a good license
■ All Stars Baseball 2003	57%	A case of strike 2003... YOU'RE OUTTA HERE!
■ Alone In The Dark: TNN	72%	An enjoyable, albeit unoriginal, slice of survival horror
■ Alpine Racer 3	52%	Straight-down-the-line (ie middle-of-the-road) skiing, er, fun
■ Alter Echo	46%	A more purple and uninspiring platform shooter you won't find
■ Amplitude	91%	This is a worthy sequel to FreQuency and all-round top rhythm game. The visuals are absolutely stunning and suit the gameplay perfectly. However, it isn't quite as original as it seems to think.

■ Antz Racing	25%	If you buy this game you're an insect. Hah!
■ Ape Escape 2001	80%	Hilarious pant-based suck-'em-up, with cheeky monkeys
■ Ape Escape 2	89%	You is a monkey if you likes platforms but you don't buys this
■ Arc: Twilight of the Spirits	43%	Can you say "Generic"?
■ Arctic Thunder	13%	It's... wait for it... snow joke!
■ Armored Core 2: Another Age	75%	Better than AC2 for reasons we can't quite define
■ Armored Core 3	69%	This is one mech game for the hardcore.
■ Army Men RTS	78%	Are we still dreaming? It's a decent Army Men game!
■ Athens 2004	86%	Athletic title that's superb for multiplayer
■ ATV2	84%	One of the better games to feature All Terrain Vehicles available
■ ATV Quad Power Racing 2	81%	Well-conceived racer with playable Challenge mode
■ Auto Modellista	76%	Enjoyable racing from the boys who delivered Street Fighter
■ Backyard Wrestling: DTTAH	72%	Decent wrestler but ultimately a poor man's smackdown
■ Bad Boys II	41%	Hell has nothing on this
■ Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance	77%	Gauntlet, but with a brain. It's only a small one though...
■ Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II	82%	If Jerry Bruckheimer made RPGs...
■ Barbarian	73%	Reasonable but flawed beat-'em-up
■ Bass Strike	60%	Could've been good if the fish bothered to bite
■ Batman Vengeance	78%	Batman-lite that needs a little more freedom to truly fly
■ Batman: The Rise Of Sin Tzu	68%	Limited but fun scrolling fighter
■ Battletax Galactica	65%	Nearly great but far too linear
■ Battle Engine Aquila	90%	Mech fighting seldom comes more frantic than this winner. Although little more than a repetitive shoot-'em-up, it does burn so very brightly. If you want something in the same vein, try Gunnin' Blaze.

■ Beach King	47%	Bizarre buggy game, you do tricks in to impress women
■ Ben Hur	45%	Piss-poor effort with horses that look like they're made of Lego
■ Beyond Good & Evil	92%	One of the most original games to grace our console. It's quirky environments and bold narrative allow for some truly unique gameplay. Ubisoft offer some terrific visuals for the kodak moments of the game.
■ Big Mutha Truckers	85%	Trucking good fun and no mistake
■ Black & Bruised	45%	Cel-shading aside, this is a P-O-O-R boxer.
■ Blade II	65%	A momentarily original beat-'em-up that lacks real depth
■ Blood Omen 2	86%	Brooding vampire adventure like it should be
■ Bloody Roar 4	65%	Simple fighting fun. Just a tad too simple.
■ BMX XXX	52%	Mindless schoolboy humour inside the Mirra engine
■ BloodRayne	60%	Breasts, blood, 'Bullet-Time' and Nazis fail to mix together. How?
■ Bombastic	69%	The puzzleless sequel to the ace puzzler, Devil Dice
■ Britney's Dance Beat	77%	Must-have for fans, little limited for everyone else
■ Breath of Fire Dragon Quarter	80%	Master the combat system for a short and tough treat
■ Broken Sword: Sleeping Dragon	82%	Nice conversion from the PC. A bit dated though
■ Buffy The Vampire Chaos Bleeds	80%	Surprisingly playable TV tie-in that beats its Xbox daddy
■ Burnout	77%	A nifty but unbalanced racer which is best dipped into
■ Burnout 2: Point Of Impact	93%	A true must-have racer that sacrifices nothing to bring you levels of speed that will have your eyes begging to be shot. It's this style of play that made the genre great in the first place, now it's back.
■ Burnout 3: Takedown	96%	Not so much as what videogames were designed for as what the human body was built to play. The perfect racing game, and damn near the best game we've ever played.

■ Capcom Vs Marvel 2	61%	2D fighting for the fan only
■ Capcom Vs SNK 2	95%	The beat-'em-up aficionado who wrote the review swore (often in a drunken state) that this is the fighting game to defeat all and who are we to argue? Well, it's only in, like, TWO dimensions – duh?
■ Castlevania	71%	What we expected but not what we hoped

GAME TITLE

SCORE

» WE SAY...

■ Catwoman	53%	An embarrassment for all concerned.
■ Centre Court Hard Hitter	70%	The basis for a cracking tennis game
■ Centre Court Hard Hitter 2	69%	A sound follow-up to the original, but still no <i>Virtua Tennis 2</i>
■ Champions of Norrath	86%	Great GWIN enhanced by terrific online play
■ Chaos Legion	71%	Hack and slash Japanimated nonsense that needs more depth
■ Choplifter	72%	Average rescue-'em-up that really needs something. Like guns
■ Circus Maximus	69%	Original multiplayer mode, unusual game
■ City Crisis	70%	A great idea that just doesn't have enough variety
■ Clocktower 3	72%	'Look at my little skirt. I can squat, too.'
■ Club Football	80%	If you value club stats over playability, this beats PES3
■ Colin McRae Rally 3	92%	A seamless journey from start to rally heaven, CM3 is just what people who like timing themselves as they burn around country lanes have been waiting for. Unless they have a car and a stopwatch, obviously.
■ Colin McRae Rally 04	93%	There was no way that Colin wouldn't return to provide yet another nauseatingly good rally sim. The quality was inevitable, but still it amazes us.
■ Colin McRae Rally 2005	89%	Better, but the same, so not as good
■ Combat Elite: WWII Paratroopers	64%	Very restricting top-down warfare
■ Commandos 2	85%	Requires thought, punishes stupidity and is ultimately rewarding
■ Conflict Zone	65%	<i>Age Of Empires 2</i> does it better in every way
■ Conflict: Desert Storm	80%	Doesn't go far enough in exploring the subject matter
■ Conflict: Desert Storm 2	87%	Better in many ways but still oh-so-slightly politically incorrect
■ Conflict: Vietnam	68%	More Vietnam Flaw than War
■ Contra: Shattered Soldier*	76%	Faithful updating of the classic series but very difficult
■ Crash Bandicoot: TWOC	73%	Bandicoot by numbers. It's okay, but lacks originality!
■ Crash Nitro Kart	51%	A game with all the vavoom of Gran's deck chair
■ Crashed	66%	If the game actually did, we wouldn't notice. This is not good
■ Cricket 2004	68%	An effortless conversion of the sport... and it shows
■ Crimson Sea 2	67%	For when medieval slashing gets boring
■ Crisis Zone	65%	Misses the point as much as you'll miss the target.
■ Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon	53%	Great film
■ Cy Girls	40%	Two bad games for the price of an average one
■ Dark Angel	49%	Nothing dark or angelic to talk about here. Just rather crap
■ Dark Cloud	80%	An inventive and fun RPG with a God-sim element
■ Dark Cloud 2*	92%	Actor/comedian Robin Williams named one of his daughters Zelda. What an idiot. Now we've got our own Zelda-beater, care of Sony and it actually looks like it's running on a modern gaming system – joy!
■ Dark Chronicle	89%	A combination of full power and pure, deep energy
■ Dark Summit	80%	A decent variation on the formulaic snowboarding genre
■ Dark Wind	65%	Solid peripheral-based gaming
■ Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2	80%	Enjoyable, well-specified and colourful BMX stunts
■ David Beckham Soccer	74%	Poor game engine mars some quality game modes
■ Dead To Rights	69%	Pure energy
■ Defender	80%	Intelligent update of a true classic
■ Def Jam Vendetta	87%	More fun than Smackdown! and with a far smoother soundtrack
■ Denou Senki Virtual On Marz	69%	You don't remember me, do you? Pure energy
■ Destruction Derby Arenas	55%	On-line but off-target
■ Deus Ex	87%	Compelling Tech-noir thriller with slight speed issues
■ Devil May Cry	93%	Forgot how good this is? See the sequel? Even that couldn't beat its majesty – and that was made by the same people who made the first one.
■ Devil May Cry 2	82%	Polished but pales in comparison to the original
■ Dino Stalker	70%	Short lifespan hampers treat for G-Con 2 owners
■ Disgaea: Hour of darkness	90%	Levelling up has never been so much fun
■ Disney Extreme Skateboarding Adventure	47%	Your little brother might like it, but we doubt it
■ DNA	42%	Had potential but, sadly, not the direction to capitalise on it
■ Dog's Life	79%	Pleasant fun that just never taxes
■ Dononapachi Dai-Ou-Jou	82%	Ripped back to full throttle it delivers a blast of pure energy
■ Dog Of Bay*	90%	If you find dogs in outfits who dance and sing as compelling as us, then get down to your importers and get a copy of this. Unbelievably good
■ Downforce	80%	Enjoyable F1 arcade racer, minus the F1 bits
■ Downhill Domination	81%	Smooth, speedy fun with added violence
■ Dragon Ball Z: Budokai	73%	A decent enough challenge that fans will definitely enjoy
■ Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 2	59%	Huge fun for about one minute and thirty seconds
■ Drakan	83%	Control both dragons and heroines in involving romp
■ Drakengard	54%	Disappointing RPG/ action adventure mish-mash.

Shoot-'em-up

Beat-'em-up

First-person shooter

Party/Puzzler

Platform

Racing

WATCH

HIDDEN FORTRESS

LISTENING OUR EYES THIS MONTH...

Is this really the film (by legendary director Akira Kurosawa) that inspired George Lucas to make Star Wars? Did he really copy the story or just, as he suggests, the idea of telling the story through the eyes of the supporting characters, not the heroes? We don't know, but we do know this DVD is simply a must-have, for Star Wars fans and Kurosawa fans alike.



HOST IN THE SHELL: STANDALONE COMPLEX

You've read the Manga. You've seen the movie. But if you haven't seen the animated series, your knowledge of Ghost in the Shell is not complete. Join Major Kusanagi and the rest of Section 9 as they battle terrorists and other foes of an orderly society. Perhaps Masamune's greatest work, Ghost in the Shell should not be missed.



GAME TITLE	SCORE	» WE SAY...	GAME TITLE	SCORE	» WE SAY...
Driv3r	71%	A bugged but beautiful disappointment	Goblin Commander	74%	As an RTS this is basic, but it is good fun
Dr Muto	65%	Platformer-by-numbers. Enough to make ya sick	Gladiator: Sword of Vengeance	59%	10 years ago this would have been really good
Dynasty Warriors 3 EL	81%	One of the better strategy fighting games	Gladius	58%	Just about average, turn based action RPG
Dynasty Warriors III	69%	Big, bold and very shallow strategic fighting game	Grandia II	69%	Engrossing story almost masks a run-of-the-mill RPG
Dynasty Warriors 4	85%	Bizarrely compelling strategy fighter set in ancient China	Gradus V	84%	Cool, but harder than a Mike Tyson statue
Dynasty Warriors 4X	78%	How Add-on packs should be	Grand Prix Challenge	85%	Infogrames nicks pole position from Sony
Dynasty Warriors: Empires	83%	Nothing new here, but the old stuff will more than suffice	Grand Theft Auto III	98%	Deriders will say that without GTAIII the PS2 wouldn't be so popular. GTAIII is the first game to combine the feel of a top arcade racing game and a shoot-'em-up under an RPG umbrella.
EJay	85%	Allows you to make music that doesn't suck quickly	GTA: Vice City	97%	"But it's just GTAIII with bikes and a killer Eighties soundtrack." Well, like, duh! This one scored a point less than the last simply because it wasn't groundbreaking.
Endgame	70%	Not terrible but lacks the polish to be essential	Gran Turismo Concept	79%	Stunningly beautiful but average nonetheless
England International Football	89%	Solid alternative to FIFA and even Pro Evolution 3	Gran Turismo 4 Prologue	51%	An empty game and a shallow promise
Enter The Matrix	80%	Better than the film... honestly	Gregory Horror Show: Soul Collector	78%	The most perfect rental ever
ESPN NBA 2Night 2002	62%	Not as good as the worst basketball game on PS2	Guilty Gear X	80%	An enjoyable, if slightly flawed, old-skool fighting game
ESPN NHL Hockey	89%	Perfect translation of the sport	Guilty Gear X2	72%	2D beat-'em-up which should please fans
Eve Of Extinction	64%	No multiplayer is the most heinous of crimes	Gumball 3000	75%	Party girls and cars make for shallow but fun racer
Everblue	45%	A diving game. Actually make that a 'dull' diving game	Gunfighter 2	86%	Faux Time Crisis in the Wild Wild West
Evil Dead: A Fistful Of Boomstick	77%	Fans will love it, non-fans will buy Silent Hill 3	Gunggrave	69%	Beautiful Manga animations can't disguise a shallow shooter
Evil Twin: Cyprien's Chronicles	43%	Irrksome, dull and ugly. Chronicle that!	Hardware	90%	Tanks and broadband come together at last in this riotous online shoot-'em up. Hugely addictive, shell exploding fun that, whilst let down by a poor ranking system, offers up to fifteen opponents in over five online arenas.
Extreme-G 3	87%	The fastest game the world has ever seen!	Harry Potter	50%	If these were a 'Quidditch' they might just be of worth. Ha!
Eye Toy: Play	83%	A lesson in original game design. Pure energy	Harry Potter Quidditch World Cup	42%	It makes a good mini-game
Eye Toy: Groove	84%	Energetic, pulsing, ridiculous fun	Haunted Mansion	58%	Highly enjoyable four-player mode if a little short
F1 2001	76%	The graphics and the sense of speed are impressive	Haven: Call Of The King	86%	Multifarious and expansive aren't the words for this huge game
F1 2002	78%	Competent if unoriginal F1 game from EA. Er, again	Headhunter	75%	An enjoyable adventure let down by some rough edges
F1 Career Challenge	89%	F1 just got reinvented courtesy of EA. Fine stuff	Headhunter: Redemption	84%	Surprisingly good adventure game
Fallout	68%	Crude but fun action RPG	Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	91%	All the thrill of playing a cloned bald man who knows how to use many weapons. The first game to use rag doll physics to a decent degree is one tough killer of a title that requires more thought than action.
Fame Academy	50%	More Sneddon than Alex	Hitman Contracts	93%	A truly wonderful game that, although not too far away from its prequels, takes the series to new heights. Graphically this is certainly one of PS2's best. Great stuff.
Fatal Frame II	81%	Disappointing, but still solid, sequel	Hunter The Reckoning Wayward	60%	No where near as much fun as monster death should be
FIFA 2002	65%	A disappointing entry in the series. Better luck next year...	Hyper Street Fighter II	77%	You know if you like this or not
FIFA World Cup 2002	80%	A good, solid football videogame that's worth a look	I-Ninja	80%	As fun as cute, psychotic ninja can be
FIFA 2003	88%	Quality reworking of the FIFA franchise	ICO	90%	The save-the-girl-and-solve-the-puzzle theme gets sweetly blended into a previously unseen level of atmosphere and emotional contact, to make this a true modern classic.
FIFA 2004	89%	Glamorous footballer let down by flawed innovation	Indiana Jones: Emperor's Tomb	75%	Decent combat let down by average puzzles
Final Fantasy X*	96%	Tenth time round and things are getting decidedly wetter than ever before. With astounding visuals that have yet to be beaten by X-2's Pal release, mixed in with a refined combat, weapons and party system.	Indy Car Series	41%	Ovals aren't fun. One of the worst racers on PS2
Final Fantasy X	94%	Easily the greatest RPG to grace the PS2 so far	Initial-D Special Stage	85%	Near-perfect conversion of cult racer
Final Fantasy X-2	84%	The wonder is lost in this direct sequel	ISS 2	79%	Lacks depth, but good fun nonetheless
Finding Nemo	55%	Poorly executed, entertaining only thanks to Pixar	ISS 3	69%	The beautiful game has lost its looks
Fireblade	70%	Good ideas executed with no proficiency	Jade Cocoon 2	70%	Fairly engrossing despite its superficial banality
Firefighter FD18	60%	Fresh elements scuppered by obvious flaws	Jak II: Renegade	92%	Added guns and a darker tone make for a superb sequel that improves on the original in every single way. What all sequels should strive to be.
Firewarrior	91%	Games Workshop made respectable by decent FPS engine	Jak And Daxter	91%	A highly polished take on the previously stale third-person platform game that manages to balance its cuteness against a backdrop of reasonably mature action. Naughty Dog certainly knows its genres.
Fight Night 2004	81%	Brutal fun that farts with innovation	James Bond Agent Under Fire	94%	Produced by the same man who gave you MOH Frontline and similar in quality and scale. It may not be GoldenEye, but it still manages to capture a certain 'Bond-ness' to a decent degree. Oh James.
Flipnic	78%	Pinball and videogames melded with style	James Bond: Nightfire	90%	Captures the Bond spirit wonderfully well
FMX	82%	Regarded by most as the best bike-based game around	Jeremy McGrath Supercross	30%	It made us super-cross
Forbidden Siren	89%	Gaming greatness gets stabbed in the back by Limies	Jet Ski Riders	60%	This will sink without trace and rightly so
Forgotten Realms: Demon Stone	79%	The Lord Of The Dungeons & Dragons' Ring	Jonny Moseley Mad Trix	40%	You'd be mad to buy it!
Formula One 2003	78%	Pure energy and no mistake. Full force	Judge Dredd Vs Judge Death	79%	Some nice 2000AD touches keep this one above average
Formula One 04	68%	Wow, it's exactly the same – but online.	Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis	80%	More 'original' than 'philistine'. More stuff like this, please
Frank Herbert's Dune	45%	You will be amused – entirely for the wrong reasons	Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer	64%	Gnarly waves and laid back style don't levitate this above the mundane
Freak Out	83%	A brilliantly inventive title that truly defies any genre	Kessen II	84%	A beautiful to watch, great to play strategy game
Freaky Flyers	54%	Poorty disguised karter offering a couple of hours of fun.	Kingdom Hearts	90%	Square meets Disney in the mind of a deranged storyteller. It couldn't work, it shouldn't work but it does and even manages to make Goofy seem like a pretty tough guy.
Freedom Fighters	92%	Possibly the finest team combat game available, this one is a brutal corker of a small-arms battle sim that begs to be completed from the off. Excellent.	Kings Field: The Ancient City	23%	The most frustrating game, maybe ever. Crap
FreeStyle	70%	A game too far for the SSX formula	Kill.switch	70%	Too little of great thing
FreQuency	82%	Hugely addictive, interactive musical gaming experience	Klonos 2: Lunatea's Veil	87%	A small yet beautifully formed platformer
Frogger Beyond	59%	A simplistic but addictive platformer			
Frogger: The Great Quest	44%	More appealing when he just hopped and got run over			
Front Mission 4	82%	Great strategy game ruined by chat			
Futurama	67%	Full power and pure energy combined			
Future Tactics: The Uprising	70%	Inoffensive, British RPG.			
G1 Jockey 3	73%	Worth it if you can find it cheap, and you like horses.			
Gallerians: Ash	73%	Disappointing mind f***k. Like bad drugs. We'd imagine			
Ghost Recon: Jungle Storm	68%	A rather disengaging war game			
Ghosthunter	69%	Another great looking and very flawed game			
Gitaroo Man	80%	Highly enjoyable four-player mode if a little short			
Glass Rose	19%	As much fun as this sentence			

Sports

Strategy

Adventure

Action Adventure

Rhythm Action

RPG

* Indicates an import review

DON'T BUY IT UNLESS WE RATE IT!



PLAYLIST

TOP FIVE

GENRE

RACING GAMES



- 01 Burnout 2
- 02 Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec
- 03 Colin McRae Rally 04
- 04 Wipeout Fusion
- 05 Rumble Racing

GENRE

PLATFORMER



- 01 Jak II: Renegade
- 02 ICO
- 03 Ratchet & Clank
- 04 Klonka 2
- 05 Rayman 3

GENRE

BEAT-'EM-UP



- 01 Soul Calibur II
- 02 Tekken 4
- 03 Virtua Fighter 4
- 04 Capcom vs SNK 2
- 05 Dead or Alive 2

GENRE

FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER



- 01 Wolfenstein
- 02 TimeSplitters 2
- 03 Rainbow Six 3
- 04 Red Faction
- 05 Fire Warrior

GAME TITLE

SCORE

» WE SAY...

GAME TITLE

SCORE

» WE SAY...

■ Knockout Kings 2002	74%	A better update but still flawed, especially in two-player	■ MTV: Music Generator 3	89%	Producers have got it easy. No question
■ Kuzushi Hype, The	59%	Arkanoid clone that's expensive at import price	■ Music 3000	89%	Simple, yet well rounded, 'choons' creation. Blingin'
■ Kya: Dark Lineage	71%	There's fun to be had but in a done-it-before kind of way	■ MX2002	73%	Adequate racing but the competition is stiff
■ La Pucelle Tactics	85%	Huge tactics-RPG fun. Prequel to Disgaea	■ MX Superfly	79%	Fans of the original should note that this is superior
■ Legacy of Kain: Defiance	81%	Decent instalment to the aging franchise	■ MX Unleashed	61%	Unleashed straight into mediocrity
■ Legaia 2: Dual Saga	55%	RPG-by-numbers with unusual fighting system. Still naff though	■ Mystic Heroes	70%	Dynasty Warriors, but aimed right at little kiddies
■ Legends Of Wrestling	53%	Incredibly tedious, non-event of a wrestling game	■ Naval Ops	74%	If you're looking for something different, this is good stuff
■ Legends Of Wrestling II	62%	Flawed wrestler for the die-hard fan only	■ Naval Ops: Commander	60%	As above, only not as good
■ Legion	57%	King Arthur turned in his grave. Twice	■ NBA Ballers	82%	One-on-one, crib-building greatness
■ Lego Drome Racers	73%	Sedate in comparison to Wipeout and Burnout, but not awful	■ NBA Jam	70%	It was cool once. And that was enough
■ Lego Racers 2	87%	A fun-filled, well-structured cart racer with universal appeal	■ NBA Live 2003	82%	Best version of the series so far
■ Le Tour De France	69%	Patience will determine your success or failure	■ NBA Live 2004	85%	Realistic trolley shooting, board grabbing fun
■ Lethal Skies	79%	Acceptable airborne antics best off bought at discount	■ NBA Street Vol. 2	90%	Slam-dunks other basketball titles
■ Lethal Skies II	79%	Ace combat that isn't	■ NBA 2k3	82%	Decent but nowhere near as fun as NBA Street 2
■ Lifeline	38%	Frustration free with voice activation	■ Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit 2	80%	Fast, but it doesn't take Burnout 2's cigar
■ LMA Manager	88%	Little change over the PSone, but still as addictive as hell!	■ Need For Speed Underground	82%	Average racer. Looks funky though.
■ LMA Manager 2003	89%	Most up-to-date version of the best management game	■ Next-Generation Tennis	57%	Painfully clear it's not how it should be
■ LMA Manager 2004	80%	Not enough has changed to warrant purchase but it's still solid	■ Next-Generation Tennis 2003	69%	Energy for those who don't require it
■ London Racer World Challenge	45%	Almost competent racer that is sure to fly from bargain buckets	■ NFL 2k3	87%	Bloody American sports sims. Better than average though
■ LOTR: Fellowship Of The Ring	72%	Something that Tolkien fans should enjoy	■ NFL Street	65%	Big and brash with nothing going on upstairs. A jock of a game
■ LOTR: The Two Towers	78%	Beautiful to look at, but slightly repetitious to play. Contains elves	■ NHL 2002	89%	New-found brains with some redesigned brawn
■ LOTR: The Return of the King	77%	What we say is irrelevant. This is going to sell.	■ NHL 2003	87%	Not strictly new, by the best update money can buy
■ Lotus Challenge	72%	Licensed racing that'll test your skill and patience	■ NHL 2004	89%	It's good - they always are
■ Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter	69%	"I'll have some pure energy, please." Full power, sir	■ NHL 2k3	87%	Fun and rewarding, this is a sports game to be treasured
■ Madden NFL 2002	91%	If you understand and appreciate the rules of American football then this is the game you need. Everything here with the usual sheen you'd expect and it works brilliantly.	■ NHL Hitz 2002	90%	Insane hockey that's a delight to play. Body-check it out!
■ Madden NFL 2003	85%	Plenty here for the hardcore fan of the chess-like sport	■ NHL Hitz 2003	90%	Yet another quality title from the Hitz stable that manages to add more style and speed without sacrificing a single drop of the action and excitement of an arcade hockey game.
■ Madden 2004	89%	Another totally acceptable foray into the world of armoured rugby	■ NHL Hitz Pro	89%	Keeps the innovation on ice, but still very good
■ Mad Maestro	76%	Simple, daft and fun but should be cheaper	■ Ninja Assault	70%	Fair translation of a rather boring arcade game
■ Mafia	65%	A no thrills, gangster gaming experience	■ Nightshade	32%	Everything that's wrong with 3D games on one disc
■ Magix Music Maker	63%	Flawed, but with the ability to entertain	■ No One Lives Forever	80%	Fun and amusing shooter that lacks depth
■ Malice	49%	Delayed platformer but not by nearly enough	■ NY Race	55%	A nice concept that's let down by its poor implementation
■ Manhunt	30%	Pathetic	■ Obscure	60%	As scary as a school canteen
■ Mark Of Kri	78%	Extremely well-presented, if rather short, hack-'n'-slasher	■ Onimusha 2: Samurai's Destiny*	90%	Much better than the original, according to our reviewer, and he should know, he's never out of his kimono. Same quality static backdrops, refined puzzles and action link fingers to give the best yet.
■ Mashed	60%	Fizzy little title marred by a chaotic camera	■ Ominusha 3	88%	More of the same but with polish and Jean Reno
■ Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX 2	82%	Capable if unoriginal fix of 'extreme' BMX thrills	■ Ominusha Blade Warriors	68%	Limiting 2D beat-'em-up with zero depth
■ Maximo	85%	An extremely polished 'homage' to the classic series	■ Outlaw Golf	78%	Funny and good
■ Maximo VS The Army Of Zin	85%	A sequel to Maximo in every sense	■ Pac-Man World 2	60%	As average as it can be without going BEYOND average
■ Max Payne	83%	It lets you shoot scumbags in slow motion	■ Parappa The Rapper 2	80%	Parappa again, same as ever, only easier!
■ Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne	68%	Move along. There's nothing to see here	■ Paris Dakar 2	57%	Average and very basic racing
■ Medal Of Honor Frontline	98%	From the initial shell shock of the beach landing through the narrow streets of urban Holland, this one has slightly more atmosphere than gaming genius, but it still packs a hell of a punch to the FPS gut.	■ Perfect Ace	50%	Energy, but not in its pure form
■ Medal Of Honor Rising Sun	81%	Frontline without the Private Ryan but with Pearl Harbour	■ Peter Pan: The Legend Of Never Land	63%	It wears its consumerism cash-in badge with pride
■ Megaman X7	62%	An updated downgrade for the franchise	■ Pinball	62%	Budget in price, gives a reasonable flick to the balls
■ Men In Black 2	62%	Too limited and shallow to warrant serious attention	■ Pirates: Legend Of Black Kat	59%	Even for kids this is a real act of piracy
■ Metal Gear Solid 2 (NTSC)	77%	Self-indulgent and rushed, but still Metal Gear	■ Pitfall: The Lost Expedition	70%	Humorous platformer that's still only a platformer
■ Metal Gear Solid 2 (PAL)	81%	Bigger code that still can't live up to its own hype	■ Pool Paradise	83%	A flawless, though not groundbreaking, game
■ Metal Slug 3	90%	Ponderous 2D sprite animation making most delectable yet	■ Polaroid Pete	80%	Those looking for the weird will find much to like here
■ Metal Arms Glitch In The System	80%	Robot on robot action. Good humoured battling	■ Police 24/7	80%	Top shooting action - a nice complement to Time Crisis
■ MGS2: Substance (Import)	78%	Far more interesting and playable than the original game	■ Pop Idol	61%	Average
■ Micro Machines	65%	Something little that doesn't go a long way	■ Pride FC	69%	Unless you're stupid you should buy other beat-'em-ups
■ Midnight Club II	82%	Arcade racing takes the PS2 online	■ Prince Of Persia	92%	This is a game that tries to do nothing new and proves a big point by doing so. You don't have to try anything 'zany' to make a good game, you just have to do what you do well.
■ Midway Arcade Treasures	80%	An eighties arcade centre on a disc	■ Project Eden	91%	More of a puzzle game than an action blaster, this one requires you to use the various skills of your team to overcome obstacles and kill the hell out of a group of nasties. Ace.
■ Mike Tyson Heavyweight Boxing	20%	An absolutely listless piece of software	■ Project Zero 2	83%	Like the first one but prettier
■ Ministry Of Sound: Interactive Edition	70%	This is not a game we play...	■ Pro Tennis WTA Tour	63%	Bog standard women's tennis sim
■ Minority Report	70%	Shallow if pretty beaten that bears little resemblance to the film	■ Premier Manager 02/03 Season	65%	Original idea that doesn't really work this time around
■ Mission Impossible Operation Summa	65%	Frustrating use of a good licence	■ Premier Manager 03/04 Season	60%	Good match play, bad menus
■ Mojibribbon	79%	To play it is to be in love	■ Primal	69%	Wander about, then just makes you wonder "WHY?"
■ Monsters, Inc.	65%	The game really doesn't belong on a PS2!	■ Prisoner Of War	79%	Exciting, yet aggravating - saved by true originality
■ Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	84%	Certainly not im-Mortal, but still highly playable	■ Pro Evolution Soccer	97%	The best, most accurate football game ever made
■ Moto GP 2	58%	No attempt has been made to fix the flaws of the original	■ Pro Evolution Soccer 2	98%	
■ Moto GP 3	69%	Motorbikes driving round sparse, characterless tracks			
■ Motor Mayhem	69%	Twisted Metal for the uninitiated			
■ Mr Golf	69%	Everybody's Golf for the PS2, which appeals to fans only			
■ Mr Mosquito	72%	Almost essential but let down by control and design issues			

Shoot-'em-up

Beat-'em-up

First-person shooter

Party/Puzzler

Platform

Racing

WATCH

DONNIE DARKO

How many alienated teenagers do you know who get visited by a giant rabbit named Frank (that only they can see)? None? Then you don't know Donnie. The director's cut of this cult classic includes storyboards, production notes, interviews and extra scenes. We really can't recommend this film highly enough – if you haven't seen it yet, you're doing yourself a disservice.



GODZILLA

This is the film that began the legend, back in a new release to celebrate the big, radioactive lizard's 50th anniversary. This is the original, uncut Japanese version of the film, which has never been released before in Australia. Forget the remakes and go straight to the source. Trust us, you'll love it.



GAME TITLE

SCORE

» WE SAY...

FIFA is a decent simulation of football, this IS football. Perfect handling and slick action. Yes, the player and team names aren't correct, but you can fix those with our previous cheats discs.
■ Pro Evolution Soccer 3 97% Keeps getting better and better. Smooth gameplay that gives for the most realistic game of football you can get without having to put on muddy boots and actually exercise.
■ Psi-ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy 91% After thousands of years of wondering, physics finally shows us what it's good for, and for that matter, so does Midway. Psychic powers and videogames – the perfect marriage.
■ Puyo Pop Fever 79% Bubble popping greatness gets a fever
■ Quake III 90% Admittedly this couldn't even hold a sparkler to <i>TimeSplitters 2</i> in terms of size and durability, but it still manages to provide excellent multiplayer, but this time with the power of gibbing.
■ R-Type Final 87% 2 and a half D scrolling shooter starship stunner
■ R: Racing Evolution 84% Eventually this is great fun
■ Rainbow Six 3 85% Wonderfully thrilling squad based-shooter
■ Rally Championship 85% Fast, playable and challenging but lacking in atmosphere
■ Rally Fusion 73% Challenging and different, but still in need of a polish
■ Ratchet & Clank 90% Great fun for the young at heart
■ Ratchet & Clank 2: L&L 82% Polished and playable without any originality
■ Rayman M 30% A game that not even the fans will forgive
■ Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc 88% Nauseatingly numpty, but platforms fans'll love it
■ Red Card 78% Hugely entertaining Vinnie Jones'-em-up
■ Red Dead Revolver 80% Gives the people what they want, but not much more.
■ Red Faction 94% It's like playing Arnie in all the best bits from his movies given the look of <i>Total Recall</i> . With no squad system to cloud your view and some excellent action set-pieces this one is certainly a pulse-quickener.
■ Red Faction 2 89% Flashier and more violent than the original, but not better
■ Reign Of Fire 80% Needed that extra couple of months in development
■ Resident Evil Code: Veronica* 85% More a reworking than a revolution
■ Resident Evil: Dead Aim 56% It amazed us that they still can't mix Resi with a lightgun
■ Resident Evil Survivor 2 Code Veronica 63% An almost totally wasted opportunity
■ Return to Castle Wolfenstein 92% Bits of <i>Medal Of Honor</i> go head-to-head with bits of every classic id game to create one of the most addictive, fast, slick and fun FPSs on the PS2.
■ Rez 73% Competent shooter that eventually caves into confusion
■ Richard Burns Rally 59% Realist fun that just isn't
■ Riding Spirits 72% Plenty here for less demanding race fans to lap up
■ Riding Spirits 2 71% Simple bike sim with a little panache.
■ Rise To Honour 77% Kung-fun
■ Roadkill 81% As decent as vehicle combat games can get at the moment
■ Robin Hood Defender of the Crown 69% Just like the original. Make of that what you will
■ Robotech Battlecacy 65% Worth a look at reduced price
■ Rocky 90% A far more exciting version of pugilism than <i>Knockout Kings</i> or the terrible Tyson effort that has the added bonus of having more Rocky in it than you would think possible. A brilliant use of a licence.
■ Rocky Legends 70% Never did have much luck with sequels did he?
■ Rogue Ops 60% If better versions of this game didn't already exist...
■ Rolling 48% A real jackass of a game
■ RTX Redrock 69% 0-30 in 8.28 secs. Pure energy
■ Rygar 79% Acceptable reinterpretation of the '86 arcade game
■ Rugby 2004 78% An authentic take on the sport. Less fun than footie?
■ Runabout 3 34% Doesn't even get you from A to B
■ Samurai Jack 50% And that's spelt: g-e-n-e-r-i-c
■ Samurai Warriors 79% Expanding the dynasty in a positive way
■ Scooby-Doo! Mystery Mayhem 65% Scrappy fun but fun none-the-less
■ Scooby-Doo! Night Of 100 Frights 70% Decent and playable but in no way original
■ Scorpion King 52% Tripe smothered in gruel and then dipped in tripe again
■ Scrabble 60% Like playing Scrabble against Will Self
■ Second Sight 65% Don't read this. Just buy Psi-Ops instead.
■ Secret Weapons Over Normandy 82% * Terrific dog-fighting fiasco
■ Seven Samurai 20XX 79% It's all gone a bit kuro-sour.
■ Socom: US Navy Seals 87% The PS2's first online game is a beauty!
■ SEGA BASS Fishing Duel 61% Shouldn't we have fishing games that are perfect by now?
■ SEGA Soccer Slam 55% Rather flat experience that's best avoided
■ Serious Sam 70% Fun for the nostalgic value if nothing else
■ Shaun Palmer's Pro Snowboarder 86% Accessible yet tough snow-sliding fun

GAME TITLE

SCORE

» WE SAY...

■ Shellshock: Nam '67 83% A mature way to have simple fun
■ Shinobi 70% A fair attempt at the annoying 1980s coin-op
■ Shox 87% A decent arcade racer
■ Shrek 2 74% A lacklustre piece of fun
■ Shrek Party 58% A lacklustre piece of fun
■ Silent Hill 2 73% Retreads old ground – pretty darn scary though
■ Silent Hill 3 78% As scary as being locked in by unlockable doors
■ Silent Hill 4: The Room 71% Fair but too keen on the same levels
■ Silent Scope 81% Highly tense, innovative shooter
■ Silent Scope 2: Dark Silhouette 68% An inappropriate conversion of an already short-lived game
■ Silent Scope 3 82% Old-skool thrills and kills at last worthy of the name
■ Slipheed: The Lost Planet* 57% Mindless blaster with limited appeal
■ Simpsons Road Rage 86% Like starring in your own episode, this is <i>Simpsons-tastic!</i>
■ Simpsons Hit and Run 81% Hardly original, but a fun game that stars Homer
■ Simpsons Skateboarding 38% Duff!
■ Singstar 80% It's a karaoke game
■ Slam Tennis 77% A game tennis fans alone will appreciate
■ Sled Storm 80% Another fun title from the 'BIG' team
■ Sly Cooper 80% Raccoon means "he scratches with his hands." We love that
■ Smash Cars 65% Totally unnecessary
■ Smash Court 80% Frustrating and annoying yet painfully addictive
■ Smash Court Tennis Pro 2 62% Not a patch on <i>Virtua Tennis</i> but still okay
■ Smuggler's Run 80% Smuggle it into your cove as soon as possible
■ Smuggler's Run 2 66% A pleasant engine and promising context
■ SOCOM: US Navy SEALS* 84% Fun single-player – we can't wait to test it online
■ SOCOM II: US Navy SEALS 87% A genuinely bigger and better kind of sequel
■ Sonc Heroes 71% A mediocre resuscitation of the light-hearted platformer
■ SOS: The Final Escape 79% Thinking person's adventure that's neither epic or disastrous
■ Soul Reaver 2: Legacy Of Cain 76% Solid and lavish, but so unfulfilling
■ Soul Calibur II 94% If you like the idea of fighting a simulated sword battle on your PS2 then there is only one choice. SCII is as perfect an addition to the genre as we have ever seen.
■ Space Channel 5 80% Ulala and Jacko in super cool 'Simon Says' game
■ Spawn Armageddon 13% Literally hell
■ Speed Kings 70% A <i>Burnout 2</i> clone, on bikes. Very average
■ Sphinx 80% Another from the fun-platformer production line
■ Spider-Man 2 79% Greatness suffocated by some mundanity
■ Spider-Man: The Movie 79% Follows the age-old movie conversion formula but it's still okay
■ Splinter Cell 83% More stealth than <i>MGS2</i> and none of the guff
■ Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow 85% Sweeter controls than the first and that's about it
■ Splashdown 2 71% Acceptable Sea-Doo racer that replaces goofy fun with realism
■ SpyHunter 90% Midway takes the vertically scrolling classic and interprets it into 3D while managing to make a new game that plays like it was designed during the arcade heyday.
■ SpyHunter2 36% Something terrible must have happened
■ Spyro: Enter The Dragonfly 73% Slightly low-key entry considering he's a dragon
■ SSX3 94% Finely tuned snowboarding game that is so near perfect, EA is going to have to spend a lot of time shopping for an idea on how to make this better. The most complete extreme sports game yet.
■ Starsky & Hutch 84% If you have a Gun-con and a wheel, this is a laugh
■ Star Wars Battlefront 92% Here's something you don't hear everyday: This <i>Star Wars</i> game kicks galactic ass. Online shooting has been more fun, nor has it been anywhere near as nostalgically-cool.
■ Star Wars: Bounty Hunter 70% <i>Star Wars</i> 'Jangoism' that'll only be a must for fanboys.
■ Star Wars Jedi Starfighter 89% No new surprises, but still great fun to play
■ Star Wars Racer Revenge 84% Playable and atmospheric, but lacks depth
■ Star Wars The Clone Wars 55% Bad missions that fail to foster <i>Star Wars</i> emotion
■ State Of Emergency 80% Violent arcade fun that's great in small doses
■ Street Dragon Ex 74% 2D shooting fun with added pizzazz
■ Stitch Experiment 626 48% Nothing here we haven't seen a thousand times before
■ Stuntman 85% Frustrating, compelling and addictive game

DON'T BUY
IT UNLESS
WE RATE IT!

PLAYLIST

TOP FIVE ONLINE GAMES

NAME
» BURNOUT 3:
TAKEDOWN



Perhaps the best racer of all time becomes the best online game of all time.

NAME
» SPIDER-MAN:
PANDORA TOMORROW



Simply the best use of Network Play since its inception. Thrilling stuff.

NAME
» TOM CLANCY'S
RAINBOW SIX 3



Great environments, awesome weapons and pure fear.

NAME
» SOCOM II:
US NAVY SEALS



Well, it's not the champion of PS2 online gaming for nothing now is it?

NAME
» NEED FOR SPEED
UNDERGROUND



A textbook example of how to improve an average racer with a Broadband wire.

GAME TITLE

SCORE

» WE SAY...

■ Sub Rebellion	74%	Involving underwater shooter that isn't sub-standard
■ Suikoden III (Import)	82%	RPG fan fodder
■ Summoner 2	83%	Better than the original and well worth a look
■ Superman: Shadow Of Apokolips	59%	Even a Man Of Steel would find this hard to put up with
■ Super Trucks	69%	It's a cliché, but this is one for racing fans only
■ SWAT Global Strike Team	79%	Just like the real thing. Which is ultimately just a job.
■ Sword Of The Samurai	80%	Intelligent fighter that improves as the fight prolongs
■ Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain	59%	Not worth the wait, but then again, what would be?
■ Tak and the Power of Juju	79%	Cutesy little platformer that isn't annoying
■ Taz Wanted	76%	Fair attempt to translate the wee devil to the digital world
■ TD: Overdrive	78%	Nothing speaks volumes except its average-ness
■ Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	51%	Nice looking but feeble game
■ Tekken 4	91%	Namco finally delivers what Tekken Tag failed to. The finest version of the series, which is so fine you wonder where it can go now. Then you see Soul Calibur 2 on the horizon and everything becomes clear.

■ Tenchu: Wrath Of Heaven	93%	Made by a team which loved the original, yet acknowledged the general duffness of the sequel, number 3 finally brings the series back together.
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■ Terminator: Dawn Of Fate	85%	Slick yet unoriginal slice of gaming that Arnie fans will lap up
■ Terminator 3: Rise Of The Machines	51%	Deserves to be terminated
■ Tetris Worlds	65%	Reasonable version that's way overpriced
■ The Italian Job: LA Heist	84%	It's Midtown Madness on the PS2
■ The Getaway	83%	Big "**** you" to anti-video game violence
■ The Great Escape	75%	Decent enough adaptation of the movie classic
■ The Hobbit	60%	The least fun part of LOTR in a game
■ The Hulk	69%	The Bentley Rhythm Ace of gaming. Pure, pure energy
■ The Sims	89%	A great existentialist work of some magnitude
■ The Sims Bustin' Out	89%	A great existentialist work of some magnitude
■ The Suffering	50%	It's impossible to care either way about this 'thriller'
■ The Thing	85%	Retains all the hallmarks of the movie
■ This Is Football 2003	55%	Finer in concept than in execution
■ This Is Football 2004	48%	This is football?
■ Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2002	89%	More addictive and fun than golf should be
■ Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2003	88%	Golf's top dog returns with another eagle
■ Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004	83%	Quite simply the best golf game in existence bar none
■ TimeSplitters 2	94%	We're still amazed how complete this game is, so if you're looking for pure quality first-person shooting underlined with VFM then this is your one stop.

■ Time Crisis 2	90%	Is this really better than Time Crisis Titan? We're divided on that one. What it is, however, is a better than perfect conversion of the delicious Namco arcade machine, since the Namco arcade uses PS2 technology.
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■ Time Crisis 3	90%	Though impossible to finish on one credit due to a bullet habit of meeting your head as you pop it round a corner, this is still choice. The hidden mode is effectively another TC game too – bargain!
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■ TOCA Race Driver	83%	Driving game with unique narrative approach
■ TOCA Race Driver 2	73%	Seemingly a compilation of lesser racers
■ Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	65%	A simplified version of the PC and the result is this!
■ Tomb Raider: Angel Of Darkness	71%	Lara but not as we know her. Half throttle at best
■ Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	94%	A piece of interactive art – gorgeously playable

■ Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	95%	The world's biggest child gets his finest playground yet. Bigger parks, more humour and the usual selection of GRB music combine to give the best SBER on the block.
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■ Total Club Manager 2004	72%	Superb menus, bad match play
■ Transformers	75%	An average game in a wonderful disguise
■ Treasure Planet	58%	Another naff Disney game
■ True Crime	72%	Good. But nowhere near as good as they said
■ Turok Evolution2	70%	A silly little game of the highest order

■ Twin Caliber	59%	Nice idea, puffed off with the grace of a dead cow
■ Twisted Metal Black	87%	Car combat finally comes of age
■ Ty The Tasmanian Tiger	70%	Kidified platformer with stereotypical Aussie accents
■ UEFA EURO 2004	55%	A big drop in form for the FIFA boys

GAME TITLE

SCORE

» WE SAY...

■ UFC Throwdown	73%	Cumbersome Ultimate Fighting sim that needs finesse
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■ Urban Freestyle Soccer	30%	From people who just don't understand fun
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■ Van Helsing	70%	An okay attempt at cloning Devil May Cry
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■ Vexx	23%	Like having your spine ripped out through your poo duct
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■ Vietcong: Purple Haze	54%	We'd rather the real thing. Maybe
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■ Viewtiful Joe	87%	2D platform genius with bullet time
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■ Vip Ripple	70%	Not helping the 'Japanese are weird' argument at all
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■ Virtua Cop Elite	80%	Exhausted Time Crisis? Your new challenge begins here
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■ Virtua Fighter 4*	94%	A fighting game for the connoisseur who knows that there is much more on offer here than its surface beauty. Admittedly, it takes a while to get to grips with, but once you do you'll be holding on for dear sweet life.
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■ Virtua Fighter 4	88%	Not quite as tasty as Tekken 4, but still fairly solid
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■ Virtua Tennis 2	90%	To say that this makes all other tennis games totally redundant isn't that far fetched. If the game can be recreated better than this then it's currently being coded in heaven. Tennis is simple, this is simply brilliant.
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■ V-Rally 3	90%	Hello to you Career mode and welcome to you, your chance to race other cars you. Although not up there with the Flying Scotsman (CMR), this racing game from Atari still has enough to make it a worthwhile addition.
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■ Wakeboarding Unleashed	83%	An absolute gentleman
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■ Wallace & Gromit	69%	Beautiful Plasticine animation, average game
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■ War Of The Monsters	60%	Further evidence to misunderstand Americans with
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■ Way Of The Samurai	78%	A game with few small, yet glaring faults
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■ Way Of The Samurai 2	72%	Very pretty and
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■ Whiplash	67%	Humorous but fails to lift above stale gaming
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■ Whiteout	56%	Twenty quid is still a lot to pay for this average racer
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■ Who Wants To Be A Millionaire	66%	All the fun of the TV show without the money
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■ Wild Arms 3	82%	Pleasing adventure let down by being a little dull
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■ Winning Eleven 7	90%	The Japanese PES's a winner too!
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■ Winning Eleven 7 International	86%	More Pro Evo 3.1 than 3.5
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■ Winning Eleven 8	93%	We're getting sick of saying 'it's better than the last one' now, so we'll just say this: Winning Eleven 8 is the best football game of all time, and it's even better if you can read Japanese.
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■ WipeOut Fusion	90%	What did you expect – it's Wip3out, but with all the backing of the power of a PS2 – it's minty! The game that brought console action to the clubs returns and it's very much a good thing. Got any water?
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■ Wolverine's Revenge	49%	Logan gets an absolute beating
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■ World Racing	28%	Depressing
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■ World Championship Snooker 03	88%	You know where you are with this one...
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■ World Championship Snooker 04	88%	...and this one
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■ World War Zero: Ironstorm	69%	A good idea that's poorly executed
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■ Worms 3D	86%	Initially strange but eventually just as good as the others
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■ Worms Blast	68%	Lacks the weapons, skill and humour of the series
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play™ | GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR GAMES

STATION MASTER

092

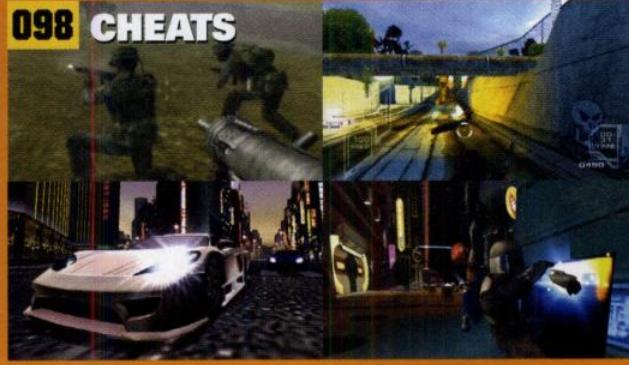
PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4

OUR GUIDE TO NOT BLAMING THE GAME

094 DEF JAM FIGHT FOR NEW YORK



098 CHEATS



HOW DOES IT ALL WORK?

WHAT WE SAID

We take a brief look back at what we thought of the game when we reviewed it.

CODES/UNLOCKABLES/SECRETS

If there's stuff to unlock in the game and codes to find it then we'll endeavour to box them out here.

RUNNING Q&AS

If you've missed a guide in the past and have a specific query we'll print it and solve it here.



STATION MASTER

Getting the most out of your games.

SCREENSHOTS

We'll illustrate our guides as best as possible by using relevant screenshots and annotations.

MAIN GUIDE

The brunt of the guide rests here. In this particular instance we're exposing some useful tips.

STATION



GUIDES

Cheats/Hints/Q&As

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4

092 In no way is this similar to our one-year-old Pro Evo 3 guide.

DEF JAM FIGHT FOR NEW YORK

094 Putting the beats to the lyrics of your game. Or something.

CHEATS

099 You sick little monkeys... you're not cheating, are you?

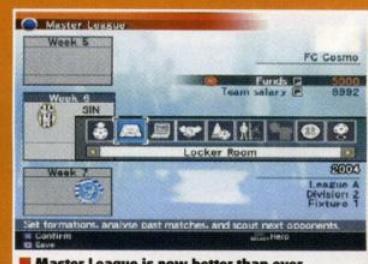
PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4

STATION



WHAT WE SAID...

Thierry Henry was incredible last season. We thought he couldn't get any better. Then he did that back-heal. God bless him, and God bless Pro Evo 4 as well, because, like Henry, it just keeps getting better. Unlike Henry though, it's still got those little niggles. 78%



The best football game ever gets the full Station Master treatment as a fitting reward.

TEAM TRANSLATIONS

North London
ARSENAL
West Midlands Village
ASTON VILLA
West Midlands City
BIRMINGHAM CITY
Lancashire
BLACKBURN
Middlebrook
BOLTON WANDERERS
South East London
CHARLTON ATHLETIC
West London Blue
CHELSEA
Crisisless
CRYSTAL PALACE
Merseyside Blue
EVERTON
West London White
FULHAM
Merseyside Red
LIVERPOOL
Man City
MANCHESTER CITY
Man U
MANCHESTER UNITED
Teeside
MIDDLESBROUGH
Tyneside
NEWCASTLE UNITED
Northluc C
NORWICH CITY
Pompy
PORTSMOUTH
Soton
SOUTHAMPTON
North East London
TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR
Nextbaumedge
WEST BROMWICH ALBION
Old Firm Green
CELTIC
Old Firm Blue
GLASGOW RANGERS

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4

GENERAL HINTS & TIPS

As with any football game, you must start with the basics. Once you've mastered the fundamental elements of the game, only then can you move on to dominate the leagues and cups.



BRINGING THE KEEPER OUT

It isn't a good idea to bring the goalkeeper out using the **A** button if a striker has breached your defensive line and is clean through. Your computer-controlled opponent will round your hapless custodian and slot the ball home. Leave the goalkeeper to make his own mind up. The only time you should hit the **A** button is when a through-ball is overhit and you can get to the ball first.



SHOOTING

Shooting is easier in this game than its predecessors. In Pro Evo 3, you could only tickle the shoot button and the ball would fly over, but in this version, you can fill the bar over halfway and still get a strike on target. You will often find shots trickling through to the goalkeeper if you're not aggressive enough with the shoot button.

TRANSFER MARKET

Sixty signing the right players at the right time is the key to success in Pro Evo 4, so here's the list that will no doubt help you on the way to victory, and yeah, we don't know why Becks is still in the dream team either.

PROMISING YOUNGSTERS

Kirkland	GK	England
Alketov	SB	Russia
Dagaka	SB	Iran
C. Ronaldo	RM	Portugal
Ivanschitz	OMF	Austria
Pitroipa	OMF	Burkina Faso
Milner	SMF	England
Cardarson	SMF	Argentina
Petrov	WF	Bulgaria
Rooney	CF	England
Vonlanthen	CF	Switzerland

TACKLING

Slide tackles are more likely to succeed in Pro Evolution 4 than previous versions, and it's often possible to hook the ball away and emerge from a tackle in possession. However, the golden rule still applies here – never make a sliding tackle in the penalty area unless you're 100% certain you will win possession!



WINNING PENALTIES

The referees take a very dim view of players catching each other's ankles, and often pull play back for a foul. This can be used to your advantage by cutting across the paths of backtracking defenders once you're inside the box. They tap your heels, you go down, a penalty will often be the result. Hey, it's all part of the game nowadays...



BARGAIN BASE

Melka	GK	Germany
M. Perez	SB	Mexico
Agostini	SB	Italy
Buckley	SMF	South Africa
Klein	SMF	USA
Inamoto	CMF	Japan
Nakata	OMF	Japan
Mirita	OMF	Hungary
Bojinov	CF	Bulgaria
Rommedahl	WF	Denmark
Rossetti	CF	Italy

DREAM TEAM STARS

Buffon	GK	Italy
Nesta	DF	Italy
Samuel	DF	Argentina
Puyol	DF	Spain
Roberto Carlos	DF	Brazil
Viera	MF	France
Beckham	MF	England
Okocha	MF	Nigeria
Aimar	MF	Argentina
Henry	FW	France
Ronaldinho	FW	Brazil

Experience points	
Manuel Helguera	29
Edmundo Salgado	28
Roberto Carlos	31
Guti H.	27
Mikeacham	27
Carlo Cossio	30
Van Fabio	21
Eduardo Ribeiro	27
Eduardo Morentes	28
Cesar Sanchez	32
Carlos Sanchez	26
Diego Puyol	22
Andrea Belotti	23
Minembres	23

■ Getting the right balance is key to victory.

Pre-season match	
1st	2nd
3rd	4th
5th	6th
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DEF JAM FIGHT FOR NY



WHAT WE SAID...

Aki and EA turn up the bling to deliver a great update that totally expands on the original game. The storyline is still as trite as ever, but if you're looking for a title that fuses some exciting wrestling with hardcore rappers, *Def Jam FIGHT For New York* will be right down your alley. 78%

It's a knockout!
Beat the world's greatest rap stars with our expert guide.



■ The key is to stay focused.



■ Try to keep your style as simple as you can.

DEF JAM FIGHT FOR NY

CHEATS

POINTS

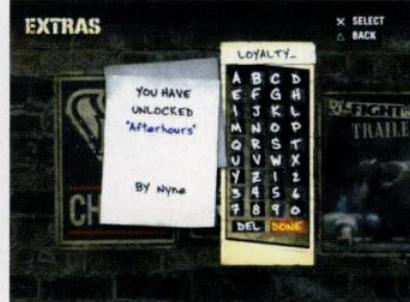
CROOKLYN	100 reward points
DUCKETS	100 reward points
GETSTUFF	100 reward points
NEWJACK	100 reward points
THESOURCE	100 reward points

TUNES

LOYALTY	After Hours by Nyne
MILITAIN	Anything Goes by C-N-N
BIGBOI	Bust by Outkast
CHOPPER	Blindside by Baxter
CHOCOCITY	COMP by Comp
AKIRA	Dragon House by Chiang
PLATINUMB	Get It Now by Bless
GHOSTSHELL	Koto by Chiang

Enter these codes in the cheat menu in the extras area to unlock all the tunes and extra reward points

GONBETRUBL	Lil' Bro by Ric-A-Che
KIRKJONES	Man Up by Sticky Fingaz
RESPECT	Move! by Public Enemy
POWER	OG Original Gangster by Ice-T
ULTRAMAG	Poppa Large by Ultramagnetic MCs
SIEZE	Seize The Day by Bless
CARTAGENA	Take A Look At My Life by Fat Joe
PUMP	Walk With Me by Joe Budden



■ There's loads of unlockables.



■ Kicks to the head are powerful.



■ Don't be afraid to get savage.

UNLOCKABLES

STORY MODE

Trick	Defeat trick
Bo	Defeat Bo
Omar Epps (OE)	Defeat Omar Epps
Skull	Defeat Skull
Cindy J	Choose as girlfriend and defeat Nyne
Kimora	Choose as girlfriend and defeat Nyne
Lil' Kim	Choose as girlfriend and defeat Nyne
Shawna	Choose as girlfriend and defeat Nyne
Shaniqua	Lose girlfriend battle to Nyne
Cruz	Defeat Cruz
Trejo	Defeat Trejo
Ice-T	Defeat Ice-T
Elephant Man	Defeat Elephant Man

Carmen Electra	Defeat current girlfriend
Solo	Defeat Solo
Sean Paul	Defeat Sean Paul
Chiang	Defeat Chiang
Masa	Defeat Masa
Crack	Defeat Crack
Dan G	Defeat Dan G
Crazy Legs	Defeat Crazy Legs
Bless	Defeat Bless
Rome	Defeat Rome
Slick Rick	Defeat Slick Rick
Lil' Flip	Defeat Lil' Flip
Baby Chris	Defeat Baby Chris
Fam-Lay	Defeat Fam-Lay
Bonecrusher	Defeat Bonecrusher
WC	Defeat WC
Warren G	Defeat Warren G
Mack 10	Defeat Mack 10
Manny	Win free for all tournament
Bubba Sparxxx	Defeat Bubba Sparxxx
Prodigy	Defeat Prodigy
Comp	Defeat Comp
House	Defeat House
Freeway	Defeat Freeway
Memphis Bleek	Defeat Memphis Bleek
Erick Sermon	Defeat Erick Sermon
Pockets	Defeat Pockets
Joe Budden	Defeat Joe Budden
Scarface	Defeat Scarface
Ghostface Killah	Defeat Ghostface Killah
Capone	Defeat Capone
Ludacris	Defeat Ludacris
Flava Flav	Defeat Flava Flav
Teck	Defeat Teck
Sticky Fingaz	Defeat Sticky Fingaz
Crow	Defeat Crow



■ Grapples are great for wearing down enemies.



■ Learn as many styles as you can.



■ Don't get distracted by the lady's... appeal.



■ Beat the crap out of this guy. Please.

CAREER ADVICE

TRAIN TO WIN

At the end of every fight and tournament you'll receive a bonus amount of development points that you can spend in the gym. These points can be used to train your fighter, buy new special moves and learn new fighting styles. To begin with, be sure to concentrate on improving your fighter's stats, then learn a new style to help you get the better of your opponents. The special moves are all very nice, but these are just for show and won't help you get to the end of the game anymore than your kick-ass sunglasses.

EASY CASH

Every time you fight in Story or Battle mode, you'll earn cash depending on your performance in the ring. The more you mix up your fighting techniques, the more cash you will be able to earn to spend on your character in the shops. The cash can then be used to buy new clothes, tattoos and jewellery to impress the crowd.

FREE FOR ALL!

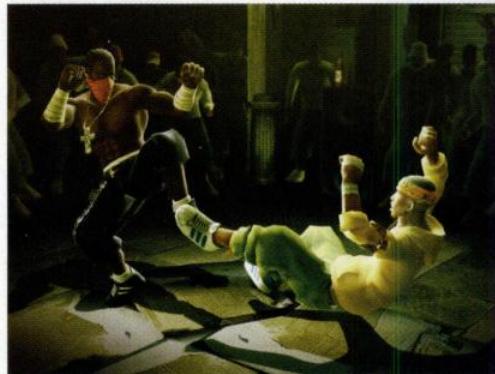
These can be extremely easy if you're careful although sometimes you'll be in for a real challenge. Your

best bet is to stay well clear of all the fighting to begin with as the other fighters will often amuse themselves by punching each other. When an opponent attacks simply knock them to the ground and then back away again to keep your health high. As soon as one of the other fighters gets low on health, try to use hard punches to knock them out from a distance, but remain in a position where you will not get double-teamed too easily. If you step into the action too early, though, all three of the hip-hop-loving fighters will pick on you and it's almost impossible to block or escape their wrath.

If you want to enjoy a long and successful career you should pay close attention to these handy hints and tips...

TEAM COMPETITIONS

Try to concentrate on one particular opponent at a time. Look to hit the opponent you feel is weakest with your biggest moves, resulting in his energy being lost more quickly and the potential for a knockout, all the more likely. If one opponent is dangerously low on energy, try not to get distracted by the other fighters in the ring; keep after the man you feel is weakest. You can gain bonus points if you help your partner so watch the action and be ready to step in when he needs you.



■ Being cool isn't as important as being victorious.



■ Special moves are strong, but no necessarily the best way to win.



■ Grabbing weapons will always help your chances.

REWARD POINTS

D-Mob (Vest)	100 points
D-Mob (Shirt)	100 points
D-Mob (Suit)	100 points
Jacob	50 points
Jervis	50 points
Kimora	50 points
Cindy J	50 points
Lil' Kim	50 points
Lauren	50 points
Shaniqua	50 points
Shawna	50 points
Snowman	25 points
Starks	50 points
Stingray	50 points
Suspect	50 points

UNLOCK BLAZIN' MOVES

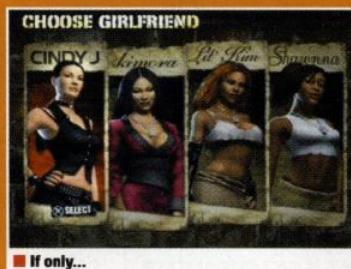
Kidney Stones	Defeat Trick
Pop Your Collar	Defeat Bo
Speedbag	Defeat Nyne
Bombtrack	Defeat Omar Epps
Latin Twist	Defeat Skull
Flatline	Defeat Cruz
Readjustment	Defeat Trejo
Iceberg	Defeat Ice-T
Good 2 Go	Defeat Elephant Man
Don't Come Back	Defeat Meca
No Way Out	Defeat Solo
Street Respect	Defeat Sean Paul
Back Attack	Defeat Chiang
Chiropractor	Defeat Masa
Filipino Pride	Defeat Santos

Crack Attack	Defeat Crack
Old School Beat	Defeat Baxter
Rock Steady	Defeat Crazy Legs
Platinumberg	Defeat Bless
Hostility	Defeat Havoc
Rough Night	Defeat Rome
The Show	Defeat Slick Rick
Game Over	Defeat Lil' Flip
Violator	Defeat Baby Chris
Final Frontier	Defeat Fam-Lay
Never Scared	Defeat Bonecrusher
Front to Back	Defeat Xzibit
Westside Special	Defeat WC
Spine Splitter	Defeat Warren G
West Threat	Defeat Mack 10
Southern Hang	Defeat Bubba Sparxx
Animal Instincts	Defeat David Banner

Break Beats	Defeat Dan G
Hell On Earth	Defeat Prodigy
2.13.61	Win one on one tournament
Claw Buster	Defeat Comp
House Call	Defeat House
North Philly	Defeat Freeway
M.A.D.E	Defeat Memphis Bleek
Double or Nothing	Defeat Erick Sermon
Air Pocket	Defeat Pockets
Pop Off	Defeat Joe Budden
The Fix	Defeat Scarface
Swing Time	Defeat Ghostface Killah
Hang Hang	Defeat N.O.R.E
Pushover	Defeat Capone
Stand Up	Defeat Ludacris
Times Up	Defeat Flava Flav
Throw Dem Bows	Defeat Teck



DEF JAM FIGHT FOR NY



Get him into a corner and give him a kicking.

FIGHTING TIPS

BEST MOVES

It is inevitable that, as the game progresses, you'll find one or two moves that you can pull off best with each fighter. However, if you pull off the same move over and over, you score less points and cause less damage. The best way round this is to perform one of your favourite bigger moves, then try a couple of other attacks, before returning to the move

you are good at. This will cause plenty of damage, and keep your score high.

TOUGH OPPPOSITION

Whichever character you're playing as, it makes sense to take note of what it is each individual opponent is especially good at. If for example, you find that your opponent is persistently reversing your grappling

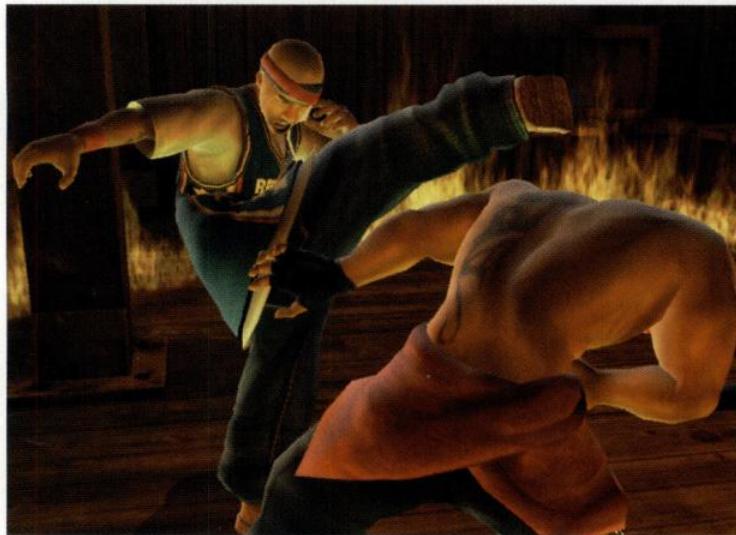
When it comes to all-out action, Def Jam is the place to be. However, once you find yourself squaring up to your opponent with the crowd all around you baying for blood, there are one or two things you ought to know...

moves, then be sensible and concentrate on striking him from a distance. There's no sense in playing right into his hands now, is there?

HARD OR SOFT?

Each fighter has two sets of moves, those from hard grapples and those from soft grapples. Understanding the difference between the two is crucial. Moves that are possible following a hard grapple

soft grapple are simpler to pull off and harder to reverse. However, they cause less damage to the opponent, and are worth less points. Moves that are available following a hard grapple will cause more damage and are worth more points, but run a higher risk of being reversed. As a rule, it's best to use soft grappling early on, and once a decent lead has been established, begin to introduce a few hard grapple moves. If your opponent



Kickboxing is a useful skill to acquire as you progress.



Use grapples to wear down your opponent's stamina.

UNLOCKABLES

Balls to the Wall	Defeat Redman
Pogo Stick	Win 125 Street Station Free for All Tournament
Repeat Offender	Defeat D-Mob
Over Hard	Win Club Murder Free for All Tournament

UNLOCK VENUES

The Limit	Defeat Trejo
Club 357	Defeat Ice-T
Babylon	Defeat Sean Paul
Dragon House	Defeat Santos
Red Room	Defeat WC
Club Murder	Defeat Crack
125 Street Station	Defeat Trejo at 125 St Station

Chop Shop	Win team competition
The Gauntlet	Defeat Lil' Flip
Gun Hill Garage	Defeat Magic at Gun Hill Garage
7th Heaven	Defeat Bonecrusher
The Heights	Defeat Prodigy
Gauntlet Intense	Win one on one tournament
Club DTP	Defeat Ludacris
Scrap Yard	Defeat Teck
Club 357 High Stakes	Defeat Redman
7th Heaven Extreme	Defeat Ludacris
Crow's Office	Defeat Crow
Scrap Yard After Hours	Defeat Crack and Magic
Red Hook Tire Co	Defeat Sticky Fingaz

UNLOCK SONGS

Original Gangster	Defeat Ice-T
Anything Goes	Defeat Sean Paul
Koto	Defeat Chiang
Dragon House	Defeat Masa
Take a Look at My Life	Defeat Trejo at 125 St Station
Blindside	Defeat Trejo at 125 St Station
Seize The Day	Defeat Bless
Get It Now	Defeat Bless
Poppa Large	Defeat Slick Rick
Bust	Defeat Lil' Flip
COMP	Defeat Comp
Move!	Defeat Flava Flav
Walk With Me	Defeat Crow

Man Up	Defeat Sticky Fingaz
After Hours	Defeat Crow
Lil' Bro	Defeat Magic at Gun Hill Garage

UNLOCK CHAINS

Sean Paul's Chain	Defeat Sean Paul
WC's Chain	Defeat WC
Crazy Legs' Chain	Defeat Crazy Legs
Fam-Lay's Chain	Defeat Fam-Lay
Xzibit's Chain	Defeat Xzibit
Freeway's Chain	Defeat Freeway
Bleek's Mercy Chain	Defeat Memphis Bleek
Capone's Chain	Defeat Capone
Luda's Skull Chain	Defeat Ludacris



You can unlock some awesome venues.



Use the locations as best you can.



The better you fight the richer you get.



There's just no excusing this beard.



Never just knock an opponent down; try to follow up with a stamp as well.

is close to defeat, it's best to play it safe and stick to the softer grappling, as the potential for some massively damaging reversal moves is greatly reduced.

USE THE CROWD

When fighting in the non-sealed arenas, the crowd is very close to the action and can help you defeat the opposition. Throw your opponent into their arms and they'll hold onto them for you to hit hard, or even bash them with an item they are holding. The crowd can be used to great effect at such times and can even help you when you're performing KOs.

BLAZIN' IT

Building up the momentum meter is the easiest way to get a win in *Def Jam FIGHT For New York*. If you manage to execute a special move whilst Blazin', and your opponent's health is flashing 'danger', then a knockout is guaranteed. However, it's important to make the most of a Blazin' spell, and sometimes this means patience is required. Should you qualify to start Blazin' BEFORE your opponent is in trouble, try and get in a couple of big hits quickly (it's worth gambling with a hard grapple). Then, when they are hurt, go into Blazin' mode



Don't forget that the crowd will join in if either fighter gets too close.

by wagging the right analog stick, and give them a couple more hits to ensure that their health is low and unlikely to recover to a safe level before you've finished. Only THEN should you perform the finishing move. If you try it too early, there's a chance that your opponent will have enough health left to survive the attack.

SURVIVING A BLAZE

Should your opponent enter a Blazin' period, then it's time to be honest about things, and take the sensible option – legging it! The best thing to do is sprint

continually around the ring, staying as far away as possible while your opponent is Blazin'. Only when he has finished should you get back within striking distance.

USE THE SURROUNDINGS

By far the best way to cause serious damage to your opponent is to throw them into metal gates, posts or any other solid item around the fighting area. While your opponent is stunned, smash their head repeatedly against the obstacle for major damage. But also be aware that they'll be trying to do the same to you too.

UNLOCK TROPHIES

Tutorial	Complete the tutorial
Raided Territory	Win against a rival in the red room
50 Wins	Win fifty fights
Speed	Max your speed skill in the gym
Subway Match Win	Win the subway match with subway KO
3 Wins in a Row	Win 3 story mode matches in a row
Free for All	Win all four free for all matches
Bling King	Spend \$200,000 on jewellery
Single Game Earning	Earn \$10,000 in a single match

TWIY	Earn \$250,000
Speed King	Beat first ten fighters in story mode in under 30 minutes
Perfect Health	Win a match without losing any health
Lower Strength	Max your lower body strength in the gym
Crowd Move	Pull off 50 crowd double team moves
Chop Shop Champion	Win the chop shop tournament
Story Mode	Complete story mode
Upper Strength	Max your upper body strength in the gym
Toughness	Max your toughness skill in the gym
Demolition	Total your opponent's vehicle

100 Combo	Achieve 100 story mode combos
Inferno Match Win	Win the inferno match without touching flames
Learning Moves	Learn all the blazin' moves
Find All Weapons	Find and use all weapons in story mode
50th Blazin'	Execute 50 blazin' taunts
First Special Move	Learn a new special move
Hybrid Styles	Learn a second fighting style
Grapple Move	Perform 25 grapple moves in a match
Window Match Win	Win a window match without touching glass

Brotherhood	Save a friend in need
Catfight	Win a catfight
K.O.	Perform 50 KOs in story mode
Health	Max your health skill in the gym
Bonus Fights	Win all bonus fights after completing story mode
No Penalty	Receive no penalties in a story mode match
5 Blazin'	Perform five blazin' taunts in a story mode match
Charisma	Raise your charisma to 75% or higher
Win %	Complete story mode with 80% or higher winning average
1 Minute K.O.	KO your opponent in under a minute
Skill Points	Max out all six skills

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